



CRISIS,
REVOLUTION,
AND
RUSSIAN
JEWS

Jonathan Frankel

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This collection of essays examines the politicization and the politics of the Jewish people in the Russian empire during the late tsarist period. The focal point is the Russian revolution of 1905, when the political mobilization of the Jewish youth took on massive proportions, producing a cohort of radicalized activists – committed to socialism, nationalism, or both – who would exert an extraordinary influence on Jewish history in the twentieth century in Eastern Europe, the United States, and Palestine. Jonathan Frankel describes the dynamics of 1905 and the leading role of the intelligentsia as revolutionaries, ideologues, and observers. But, elsewhere, he also looks backward to the emergent stage of modern Jewish politics in both Russia and the West and forward to the part played by the veterans of 1905 in Palestine and the United States.

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Crisis, Revolution, and Russian Jews

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To our grandchildren, with love:

Ariel, Eviatar, Dora (Dvorah), Daniel, and Yarden (Jordan)

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Acknowledgments

On May 7, 2008, Jonathan Frankel passed away. He had managed to prepare this collection of his articles focusing on Russian Jews in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and had already arranged for one of his doctoral students to put together the index, under his supervision. It is a matter of great sadness that he did not live to see the publication of this volume.

The first set of proofs arrived during the traditional week of mourning, and the second set in August. A number of people helped me with problems large and small so that I could put the material in good order. The largest job was that of organizing the index, for which I thank Samuel Barnai, who did a careful and thorough job and showed great patience in checking it over with me. Malka Jagendorf – a close friend of our family – volunteered to go over every single page after I had completed the first reading and picked up many of those errors that I had missed. Others to whom I am grateful for help are Abraham Ascher, Laurie Fialkoff, Israel Getzler, Rachel Frankel Heller, Hannah Koevary, Syrell Rogovin Leahy, and Eli Lederhendler.

The editor assigned to the publication process – Russell Hahn – has been the soul of patience and clarity, and of course Jonathan would have wanted to mention his special thanks to Frank Smith, who has been his editor at Cambridge University Press for decades.

As this volume is the sum of a number of articles that appeared in various publications, the policy has been to retain the internal editing and spelling rules of each essay and not to establish a consistent editing policy for the book as a whole. Therefore, some variations in transliteration and the spelling of names will be noticed.

Inevitably, errors will be found or insufficiencies noted, but bear in mind that they are my responsibility and not Jonathan's. The beauty and clarity of his work will nevertheless shine through.

Jerusalem
September 2008

EDITH ROGOVIN FRANKEL

Introduction

The eleven essays brought together in this book focus broadly, although not exclusively, on the history of the Russian Jews in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. But within those parameters, the primary emphasis is on the years 1855–1921, stretching from the accession of Alexander II (the “Tsar Liberator”) to the end of the Russian Civil War – a period of fateful importance in the history of Russia, of the historic Polish-Lithuanian lands, and of the Jewish people.

Written as individual articles at different moments over the last twenty-five years, the essays vary considerably in type and in subject matter. Some are essentially microcosmic case studies, while others seek a broader overview; most deal directly with history, but two are studies in historiography; and while the geographic center of gravity here is to be found in the Pale of Settlement and Congress Poland, there are also chapters that examine episodes in the public life of the Russian Jews in their emigrant communities overseas, in the United States of America, and in Ottoman Palestine.

However, for all the diversity, a number of key themes dominate in this volume, lending the separate essays a measure of coherence. Framing the entire collection is the idea that modern Jewish politics, which first emerged in the West during the early decades of the nineteenth century, increasingly – beginning in the 1880s – took on radically different forms in the Russian empire. Of course, to employ the concept of “modernity,” in opposition to “tradition,” as an explanatory tool necessarily means to impose an artificial measure of neatness on complex historical realities, but I take it as a given here that abstractions of this kind can hardly be avoided if shape is to be given to the Jewish (and, indeed, the general) history of recent centuries.

While the politics of the traditional Jewish world, so the argument goes, was corporatist, based on a juridically authorized measure of internal self-government, on fiscal (tax-collecting) autonomy, and on powers of coercion, modern Jewish politics developed on a voluntary basis. In the traditional setting, it was the selected communal representative, the *shtadlan*, who had the task of interceding with the authorities whenever necessary, thus embodying the higher politics of the community: at once a spokesman, a diplomat, and a conveyor of emergency payments (or bribes, to use an anachronism). In contrast, in its modern form, Jewish politics depended (and outside Israel still depends) on the ability to recruit members to associations, movements, and parties that pursued a wide variety of different, and often conflicting, goals.

Traditionally, Jewish politics was oriented toward the present, if not the past, and was defensive or, at most, cautiously incrementalist, as dictated by the dependent status of the Jews as a small religious and ethnic minority in the Christian and Islamic worlds. As against that, what drove the development of modern Jewish politics was the belief that the dynamics of change was creating a future different – perhaps totally different – from the present and that Jews had to organize themselves in order to exert an influence on, and find a place in, the shape of things to come. The one system was theocentric, and rabbinical authority ruled much of everyday life; the other was anthropocentric, resting on the assumption that society was being remade by man on the basis of new, universally applicable principles: liberty, equality, and national self-determination – principles that could be seen either as complementary or as mutually exclusive and antagonistic.

It was with the creation of the Alliance Israélite Universelle in Paris in 1860 that the Western version of modern Jewish politics first truly came into its own (the “reception” of the Alliance in the Russian empire and elsewhere is the subject of the second chapter of this book). In the manifestos setting forth their credo, the young founders of the organization stated with great confidence that the liberal principles of 1789 were everywhere gaining ground and that the march of Progress was unstoppable. The task of the Alliance was, therefore, to advance the course of Jewish emancipation wherever possible; to rally public opinion in defense of Jewish communities suffering persecution at the periphery of the civilized world; and to encourage the Jewish people to prepare itself (primarily through the enlightened and utilitarian schooling of its children) to participate as equal citizens in the life of their countries. Similar ideas subsequently inspired the establishment of, for example, the

Anglo-Jewish Association, the Israelitische Allianz in Vienna, and (in 1906) the American Jewish Committee.

Sharing the same liberal or “emancipationist” belief system were the founders and leaders of the major Jewish philanthropic organizations, which, while devoted primarily to combating poverty and advancing “productivization,” could not avoid entanglement in politics (both local and international), among them being the Hilfsverein in Germany, the Jewish Colonization Association (founded by Baron Maurice de Hirsch in Vienna), and, most important of all, the American Jewish Distribution Committee. A line of thought essentially no different inspired such Jewish financial magnates in St. Petersburg as Evzel Gintsburg and Samuil Poliakov to create, respectively, the Society for the Dissemination of Enlightenment among the Jews of Russia (OPE) in 1863 and the Society for [the Advancement of] Artisan and Agricultural Work among the Jews in Russia (ORT) in 1880. That gradual change, guided jointly by the regime and by the Jewish liberal elites, would produce a process of incrementalist emancipation or “selective integration” (the term employed by Benjamin Nathans in his recent groundbreaking study of St. Petersburg Jewry, *Beyond the Pale*)¹ was the assumption, or at least the hope, of the Gintsburgs, the Poliakovs, and a significant number of their fellow Jews in the Russian capital.

However, for the most part, the spotlight in this book is directed elsewhere, toward those individuals and groups that believed in, and worked for, a revolutionary rather than an evolutionary breakthrough to the future. In the last decades preceding the First World War, modern Jewish politics in the Russian empire, and specifically in the Pale and the Polish provinces, was characterized ever more sharply by deviations from the Western pattern of emancipationism with its single-minded concentration on the attainment of civil rights. Thus, for example, from the early 1880s, emergent nationalist movements spoke in terms of an exodus from Russia and the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine or, perhaps, in the American West. In consequence, when, almost twenty years later, the Viennese journalist Theodor Herzl made his sudden and charismatic appearance on the Jewish stage expounding the same radical ideas, he found by far his most enthusiastic following in the tsarist empire.

The mainstream Russian Zionists, like the Hibat Zion (or “Palestinophiles”) before them, had revolutionary ideas, but they were not

¹ Benjamin Nathans, *Beyond the Pale: The Jewish Encounter with Late Imperial Russia* (Berkeley, 2002).

revolutionaries. In contrast, the Jewish parties such as the Bund, which espoused socialism in combination with various forms of nationalism, threw themselves heart and soul into the insurrectionary movement directed against the tsarist autocracy and ultimately, as they saw it, against the capitalist system. Their assumption was that eventually it would be possible to attain a complete synthesis of liberty, equality, and Jewish national self-determination (be it autonomist or territorial in form). Many factors combined to produce this heady utopian mix, but it is certainly arguable that one such ingredient was a secular transformation, usually presented in would-be scientific terms, of the traditional messianic faith then still so much part of everyday discourse on “the Jewish street.”

Within this context of the radicalizing process at work in Russian-Jewish politics, the focus in most of the essays collected here is specifically on the role played by the intelligentsia. In Chapters 4, 5, and 10, respectively, the attempt is made to trace the ways in which Shloyme Zanzvil Rappoport (S. An-sky), Yosef Haim Brenner, and Shimon Dubnov understood and reacted to their times (whether during a limited period or, in the case of Dubnov, over a life’s span); while in Chapters 7 and 8, attention shifts overseas to ideological disputes conducted among emigrant members of the Russian-Jewish intelligentsia in Ottoman Palestine and in interwar New York. Socialist anti-Zionism, the subject of Chapter 9, also developed initially as a polemical dispute pitting Jews in rival political camps against each other, only later to be taken up by the Soviet regime as an important matter of state policy.

It would certainly be misleading to suggest that the radical Jewish movements, whether nationalist, socialist, or based on some combination of both, were dominated solely by the intelligentsia. During their periods of rapid growth, broadly speaking in the decade from the mid-1890s until 1906, workers in large numbers flooded into the Bund and into its rival Jewish socialist parties (and that was the case again in 1917 and – particularly in the 1930s – in interwar Poland). For its part, the mainstream Russian Zionist movement (like *Hibat Zion*) was largely peopled by members of the middle class for whom the idea of an exodus from Russia had no practical bearing on their everyday lives; and in the upper echelons of those organizations was to be found no small number of Orthodox rabbis.

Nonetheless, in the absence of a political class ready to think beyond cautiously incremental measures (the preferred policy, as already noted, both of the St. Petersburg financial elite and of the traditional leadership,

most of the rabbis included), radical initiatives became the almost exclusive domain of the *intelligenty* (with their command of Russian or Polish) and, to a lesser extent, of the yeshiva-educated “half”-intelligentsia. It was the intelligentsia that produced the breakthrough ideologies oriented toward an imagined future and that, almost unaided, launched the organizations confidently expected to lead the way to that future, to a juster world that would eliminate the “Jewish question.” And when the radical parties went into catastrophic decline in the decade from 1907 until 1916, it was the intelligentsia again that ensured that the development of a modern Jewish culture, whether in the Hebrew or the Yiddish language, would gain momentum.

Still another, a third, theme that has pride of place in this book is the focus on periods of crisis. The years of the first pogrom wave (1881–82); of the first Russian revolution (1905–07); as well as of the First World War, the February and October revolutions, and the Civil War – 1914–21 – provide the basis for all four chapters in the second section of the book. (Moreover, two widely publicized causes célèbres involving major attacks on Jews and, in effect, on the Jewish people – the Mortara case of 1858, which led in response to the formation of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, and the so-called Damascus Affair, or Blood Libel, of 1840 – serve as issues of key significance in the opening chapters of the volume.)

In the radical turn taken by modern Jewish politics in Russia, the years of upheaval, of crisis, proved, so I claim here, to have been of exceptional importance. It was at such moments that so many could conclude that the misbegotten present was doomed and that a future totally transformed was within grasp. And it was then that the political activists, *teoretiki* and *praktiki*, had their chance, however fleeting, to mobilize a large, sometimes a mass, following.

If the impact of the crises in tsarist Russia made its mark primarily in the Pale of Settlement and Congress Poland, its effect was also felt abroad, stimulating various protest campaigns, diplomatic interventions by foreign governments, and the foundation of new organizations designed to respond rapidly to future disasters whether in Russia or elsewhere – among them most notably, as already mentioned, the American Jewish Committee, set up in 1906, and the Joint Distribution Committee, established in 1914. Even though such initiatives were rarely radical in intention, the fact remains that the international dimension of Jewish politics proved to be a significant factor not only in the development of the nationalist movements in the tsarist empire (*Hibat Zion*, Russian

Zionism and Territorialism) but even in that of the Bund, which depended for much of its budget on fund raising in the United States.

The argument is made here – and this is a fourth theme to be found in the book – that, for all the vast differences involved, modern Jewish politics, whether in its “Western” and liberal or its “Eastern” and radical incarnation, can be envisaged as constituting a single “subsystem” with a two-way feedback linking Russia to the West in myriad ways. (To take one striking example, mentioned in Chapter 3, in late 1905 Judah L. Magnes, then a New York rabbi closely linked to such members of the American Jewish establishment as Jacob Schiff and Louis Marshall, became one of the leaders of the Jewish Defense Association, which took it upon itself to channel funds from the United States to the revolutionary socialist Zionist and territorialist organizations in Russia. The money was earmarked to reinforce the self-defense groups formed to combat the pogroms and was largely spent to purchase weapons to be smuggled into the country from abroad. At the Russian end, the figure who initiated this clandestine scheme was Manya Vilbushevich – later Shochat – one of the more colorful and, in some ways, notorious personalities on the Jewish Left in Russia, as later in Ottoman and Mandatory Palestine.)

In the essays brought together here, I have developed, and elaborated on, subjects that first occupied me in my book of 1981, *Prophecy and Politics*.² A number of the key ideas that I built on there, and that reappear here, have meanwhile come in for criticism, both explicit and implicit, from fellow historians. The publication of the present book thus provides me with the opportunity to discuss some of the major issues raised by them, as indeed by my own retrospective reflections.

Three of the four pivotal ideas just enumerated have been the object of such criticism. First, it has been argued both by Yoav Peled³ and by

² *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism and the Russian Jews 1862–1917* (Cambridge, 1981).

³ Yoav Peled, *Class and Ethnicity in the Pale: The Political Economy of Jewish Workers' Nationalism in Late Imperial Russia* (New York, 1989). Peled summarizes his argument thus: “The most plausible explanation of the evolution of the Bundist ideology is the one which views it as an expression of the political consciousness of Jewish workers.” (p. 119). In elaborating on this thesis, he writes: “The social reality within which the identity of Jewish workers was formed had both ethnic and class dimensions to it . . . [The] workers were thus caught in the cross currents of common and conflicting interests with both their co-ethnic employers and their class-comrade competitors. As a result, they developed what may be termed ‘ethno-class consciousness’, a consciousness of the distinctiveness of their own interests in relation to both these groups” (p. 121). And

Matityahu Mintz⁴ that my focus on the role of the intelligentsia as being of dominant importance in shaping the course of radical Jewish politics in the Pale and Congress Poland is one-sided and provides a distorted picture of historical realities. Specifically, they insist that what led the Bund to take its historic decision to adopt a program in 1901 based on national (as well as civil) rights was the pressure of deep-rooted structural factors, both social and economic, and not, as I believe, a mix of fierce ideological debate, conducted largely in the émigré student colonies in Switzerland, and organizational pressures engendered by complex interparty – and intraparty – conflicts.

Second, my claim that sharp disjunctures in the ongoing historical process played a decisive role in Russian-Jewish history during the late tsarist period has been held to be excessive by Benjamin Nathans (and, indirectly, by others).⁵ The contention is that the emphasis on the decisive importance of crises inevitably diverts attention from long-term trends in

he concludes: “From the onset of its ‘agitational’ phase, the Bund sought to represent, rather than to shape, the consciousness of the Jewish working class” (p. 131).

⁴ Matityahu Mintz, “Lesugiyat hamegamah haleumit shel habund,” *Gal-Ed: Measef letoledot yehadut polin*, vol. 17 (Tel-Aviv, 2000), pp. 12–20. One of the problems with *Prophecy and Politics*, argues Mintz (with much exaggeration, in my opinion), is that there the ideological development of the Bund is explained as resulting from “the manipulative maneuvers of functionaries and *intelligently* seeking view points and modes of action calculated to entrench them in their established and privileged positions” (pp. 18–19). On the contrary, he insists, “the Bundist workers, or alternatively the group of *intelligently* which linked itself to those workers, did not invent some distinctive form of Jewish nationalism in order to fence themselves in behind a wall of wounded pride. They were part of the process producing a steady rise in Jewish power” (p. 19).

⁵ Nathans, *Beyond the Pale*, pp. 7–13. For example: “According to what one might call the crisis paradigm, the pogroms of 1881–82 were the catalyst of modern Jewish politics in pre-revolutionary Russia, a decisive turning point in Russian-Jewish history, and indeed modern Jewish history as a whole. But there have been important qualifications and amendments to this view. . . . Taken together, these responses do more than just complicate the periodization of the Russian-Jewish encounter. I believe they unsettle the entire notion of a revolutionary ‘leaping of phases’ among Russian Jews . . . [and] point to a kind of Tocquevillian revisioning that seeks not to deny the profound upheaval that occurred in Russian Jewry (just as Tocqueville never denied that a revolution occurred in France in 1789) but rather to reveal the subtler forms of change as well as continuities that bridge the moments of crisis” (p. 9). For examples of the qualifications and amendments mentioned here, see, e.g., Michael Stanislawski, *For Whom Do I Toil? Judah Leib Gordon and the Crisis of Russian Jewry* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 146–199 and particularly pp. 146–8; Eli Lederhendler, “Messianic Rhetoric in the Russian Haskalah and Early Zionism,” in *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, vol. 7 (*Jews and Messianism in the Modern Era: Metaphor and Meaning*), ed. J. Frankel (New York, 1991), pp. 14–33; and idem, *The Road to Modern Jewish Politics: Political Tradition and Political Reconstruction in the Jewish Community of Tsarist Russia* (New York, 1989). For an important contribution to this ongoing discussion, see David Engel, “Crisis and Lachrymosity: On Salo Baron,

that history – trends that in many cases were rooted in everyday, even “normal,” life. Emergencies certainly attract optimal attention, but, so the reservations run, their ultimate impact can all too easily be exaggerated.

Finally (and here again the critic is Matityahu Mintz), the question is asked whether there is not a serious historiographical risk in laying stress on the emigrant communities when analyzing the dynamics of change on “the Jewish street” in the Pale and Congress Poland. Given the rapid rate of socioeconomic and cultural change affecting the Jewish people in the Pale and in Congress Poland – the population explosion, accelerating urbanization, new patterns of employment, the emergence of Yiddish as a language of mass communication – is there justification for hunting out external factors to help explain major developments within the world of Russian-Jewish radicalism?⁶

At the inevitable risk of misinterpreting these different lines of criticism, I would suggest that they share a preference for modes of historical explanation based more on continuity than on contingency. But for my part, I do not perceive the issues as a case of either/or. History proceeds simultaneously on different levels. Everyday life and long-term trends have their own momentum and their own logic; but so too do the discontinuities produced variously by political leaderships, by crises, by revolutions, and by wars. Ideally, an author setting out to write a comprehensive study of a nation, of a state, of a civilization, or of the world would eschew a priori all-encompassing historiographical theories, choosing rather to give due weight – in accord with the material at hand – to both evolutionary and revolutionary factors.

However, in the great majority of cases, historians, myself included, usually choose to study specific aspects of the whole (the history of particular developments, of institutions, of events, of ideas, as the case may be), thus accentuating the subjective factor that accompanies all historical research and analysis. What the historian decides is significant, and therefore worthy of study, depends largely on his (or her) own personal

Neobarionism and the Study of Modern European Jewish History,” *Jewish History*, vol. 20, nos. 3–4 (2006), pp. 243–64.

⁶ See, for example, Mintz’s comment that it is fundamentally erroneous “to overlook the cardinal difference that distinguished the Jewish communities in Eastern Europe, socially compact, demographically numerous and deeply rooted, from the relatively small-scale Jewish immigrant populations in the London and New York of the 1890’s. . . . The ethnic presence and consciousness of the Jews in Russia, Poland, Galicia and Romania was so variegated, so tangible, so vital, that any attempt at comparison with the East End of London is fundamentally flawed, irrelevant – and the same holds true of the Lower East Side of New York” (“Lesugiyah hamagemah haleumit,” pp. 15–16).

viewpoint, as formed variously by his life experience and by his place in an ever-changing sociopolitical and historical context. In an effective metaphor, E. H. Carr once compared history to a

moving procession . . . swerving now to the right and now to the left, and sometimes doubling back. . . . New vistas, new angles of vision, constantly appear as the procession – and the historian with it – moves along. The historian is part of history. The point in the procession at which he finds himself determines his angle of vision over the past.⁷

Given my particular place in this moving column, it is hardly surprising that my perspective on modern Russian, Jewish, and Russian-Jewish history would not necessarily be shared by others. That I emphasize the importance of crises in that history seems to me natural enough given the times and the places that shaped my formative years. Even though I personally came through totally unscathed, it is nevertheless true that I grew to adulthood and maturity during a period when danger and drama were part of the woof and weave of history. As a child I lived through the Second World War in Britain; I reached my thirteenth birthday in July 1948, when the new state of Israel was fighting its war of independence; and since I moved to that country in 1964, it has experienced no less than six major armed conflicts, as well as two prolonged Palestinian uprisings.

All of this would no doubt in itself have been enough to make me acutely conscious of the inherent instability and lack of predictability in human affairs. However, it was the June (or Six-Day) War of 1967 that first brought home to me the idea that crises, however short-lived, could actually serve as turning points in the course of history. The transformation of the political climate in the country from the deepest anxiety prevailing in the weeks before the war to the almost boundless euphoria afterward was truly astonishing, and arguably produced a fateful break in Israel's development, dividing the "smaller" minimalist state of 1949–67 from the postwar "greater" Israel in which quasi-messianic groups proved able to redirect public discourse and the settlement policies of the state.

Of course, none of this would have been possible if the Zionist enterprise (on the left as well as on the right) had not throughout its development nursed maximalist potentialities, but they had become increasingly marginalized, even anachronistic, in the years prior to the outbreak of the June War. (The debate within the labor-oriented Russian-Jewish

⁷ E. H. Carr, *What Is History? The George Macaulay Trevelyan Lectures Delivered in the University of Cambridge*, January–March 1961 (London, 1985), p. 30.

intelligentsia in Ottoman Palestine – the “Second Aliyah” – regarding the future of Arab-Jewish relations forms the subject of Chapter 7).

The idea that the crisis of 1881–82 exerted a decisive impact on the development of radical (“post-liberal”) Jewish politics in Russia and in the emigrations was thus inspired directly by the shock of June 1967 (or so it seems to me in retrospect). Similarly, personal experience in all probability lies at the root of my intuitive assumption that politics and political culture function to a significant degree according to their own logic and dynamics, enjoying a measure of “autonomy,” and should not be regarded as a mere epiphenomenon.

After all, could one grow up as a child in Britain in the 1940s without having the importance of leadership and leaders, as a potentially decisive factor in the affairs of men, stamped deeply on one’s consciousness? Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin, and Hitler all loomed far larger than life in my understanding. And in the Jewish subworld there was David Ben Gurion, no less a remarkable figure, albeit on a microcosmic rather than a macrocosmic scale – the man who, arriving in Palestine from the Russian empire in 1906, did so much to forge the strategy and tactics that led to the establishment of Israel in 1948.

At the same time, to put the case for the possibly decisive role of leadership in the historical process is in no way to deny that such leadership can function effectively only within the severe constraints imposed by social, economic, and cultural factors. No more is being claimed than that the sphere of politics cannot be reduced to a superstructure ultimately determined by the socioeconomic or sociocultural base.

In the Bundist historiography, it has always been maintained that the transition from an integrationist to a nationalist platform was dictated by “life” itself, meaning by the pressures exerted from below by the Yiddish-speaking masses. This explanatory model fitted the Marxist concept of the essentially one-way causal relationship between the factor of class and that of ideology: a world outlook that sought scientific certainty in a determinist ideology.

But if the Bundists, like the mainstream Mensheviks, thought along such lines, Lenin did not. And here too was a formative influence on my thinking about the autonomous role of politics (an influence going back half a century to my days as a Ph.D. student). While always finding Lenin’s ruthlessness, fanaticism, and Machiavellian methods repellent, I nonetheless still stand in awe of his ability to combine a Marxist, socio-economic grasp of deep-rooted historical forces with an extreme voluntarism in the tradition of Russian revolutionary Jacobinism. His

“top-down,” avant-garde model of highly centralized control went hand in hand with his remarkable understanding of the revolutionary potentialities at work in Russian society.

True, in the very long run the primacy of politics imposed so violently and so totally on Russian society by Lenin and Stalin proved to be unsustainable. Nonetheless, for some seventy years, the Bolsheviks (renaming themselves Communists) did bestride the stage of world history; and still the story is not fully told, as witness the survival of the Communist regimes in Cuba, Vietnam, North Korea, and China.

The radical turn in modern Jewish politics that developed in the tsarist empire starting in the 1880s belongs both to Russian and to Jewish history, but in very different ways. Within the history of Russia, the role played by the post-liberal Jewish political movements (whether advocating a massive exodus to a Jewish state or revolutionary socialism and nonterritorial national autonomism) was no more than marginal. At the crucial moments, the fate of the revolutions in 1905 and 1917 was decided in heartland Russia, in St. Petersburg and Moscow, and not in the western borderlands. Allied to the Menshevik party (or faction) from 1912, the Bund had its say in the infighting within the ranks of the Russian Social Democratic movement, and a number of its leaders, most conspicuously Mark Liber and Rafael Abramovich, rose to prominence in the St. Petersburg Soviet as among the most eloquent champions of the anti-Bolshevik cause. But none of that could be said to have exerted a decisive influence on the unfolding of the revolutionary process across the vastness of the Russian state (and this was even more true of 1917 than of 1905, because some half of the pre-war Jewish population was by then living under German rule in occupied Poland and Lithuania).

The same, of course, cannot be said of the many young Jews who opted to join not the Jewish revolutionary movements but, rather, the interethnic parties: the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (the SDs) – the term “Russian” here denoting “empire-wide” – and the Party of Socialist Revolutionaries (the SRs). There, at least potentially, they had the chance to act in an immense arena, very different from the confined possibilities open to the Jewish parties of the Pale. (This was a dilemma debated in An-sky’s novel *In Shtrom*, the subject here of Chapter 4.) Potentialities became realities during the revolutions of 1905 and 1917 when Mensheviks, Bolsheviks, and Socialist Revolutionaries of Jewish origin, together with members of other minority nationalities, most notably Latvians and Georgians, were able to play a key role at the highest levels.

And even though Jews had never been attracted in large numbers to the Bolshevik (as opposed to the Menshevik) faction, their part in the October revolution and consequent Bolshevik victory in the Civil War was nonetheless significant. In this context, the saga of Lev Davidovich Trotsky (Bronstein) can be seen as symbolic.

The subject of this book, though, is not the “non-Jewish Jews” (to paraphrase Isaac Deutscher’s well-known term), but specifically the Jewish politics so fiercely condemned as parochial by Trotsky and his fellow internationalists. And while the Jewish parties exerted only a minor impact on Russian history, the reverse was certainly not the case. The leadership stratum of the radical Jewish movements was profoundly influenced by the ethos of the Russian revolutionary intelligentsia and, to a great extent, even saw itself as a subsection within that unique milieu. It took from the Russian revolutionary tradition, dating back to the Decembrists, the belief in the necessity to engineer a total break with the existing political and moral system; the faith in a new world ready to be brought forth out of the old (a faith rooted variously in quasi-science or in ethical imperatives); and the readiness to sacrifice oneself for the sake of mankind.

From today’s perspective, this political culture can only appear as utterly remote. It took for granted that mankind was predestined to advance ever upward, dialectically and violently, perhaps, but still inexorably – an assumption undermined since then by the intervening catastrophes of the twentieth century. There was much in the outlook and behavior patterns characteristic of the radical Jewish intelligentsia (with notable exceptions, certainly) that repels: the transformation of implausible socioeconomic theories into rigid ideologies; utopianism; an excessive party-mindedness; intolerance and fanaticism. But there was also much to admire: a highly developed social consciousness; a determination to translate what was in origin high-minded theory into practice; commitment; enthusiasm; dedication to the public cause (however defined).

It is these contradictory and often paradoxical tendencies that lend the new Jewish politics in the era of the Russian revolutions its abiding fascination. Certainly, it was a *sui generis* moment in modern Jewish history and anything but typical. As Charles Dickens wrote of an earlier era and in a different context: “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity.”⁸

⁸ Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities* (London, 1973), p. 3.

PART ONE

NEW DYNAMICS?

I

Crisis as a Factor in Modern Jewish Politics, 1840 and 1881–1882

The crises created by acts of Judeophobic, antisemitic aggression played a crucial role in the history of the Jewish people during the nineteenth century. A direct challenge to the security of the Jews in one country or another could not go unanswered, especially when, as was so often the case, it came in times of peace and relative tranquillity. The Jews had to respond in some way. But how to interpret the challenge, how best to react, were questions of the highest complexity; and the answers varied radically according to time and place.

After all, so long as they lived their lives in the Diaspora, scattered and essentially landless minorities, the Jews as a collectivity did not have to face the tests regularly imposed on sovereign nations by war or revolution. Of course, such all-engulfing eruptions caught up Jews and Jewish communities, often with far-reaching results, but only as parts within a greater whole. In contrast, events such as the Damascus blood libel of 1840, the Mortara case of 1858, the recurring anti-Jewish excesses in Rumania during the 1870s, the pogroms of 1881–82, the expulsion from Moscow ten years later, and the Dreyfus Affair involved the Jews, first and foremost, precisely as Jews, as a collective entity. It is this fact that lends these episodes their unique importance for the historian of modern Jewry. In studying them, he may hope to find his way to realities, forces, that in normal times remained hidden far beneath the surface of everyday existence. In this sense these crises in Jewish life were the nearest equivalent to war and revolution in the history of a state, a sovereign society. At such a juncture, every assumption, however time honored, may be called into question, and ideas, normally too utopian to voice, can enter

the discourse of the everyday. This is the extraordinary moment in the onward flow of time.

Crisis brought a number of interconnected issues into play. To what extent did the Jews act in accord with a sense of solidarity? How far did this impulse embrace Jewry across international frontiers – across Europe? throughout the world? Had not acculturation, assimilation, allegiance to the host society, nation, nationalism undermined, in part or *in toto*, supraterritorial loyalties? With Judaism and Jewry under the most intense scrutiny, what positions were adopted by the public at large, by the various strata that in every country made up the majority society? And how, in turn, did these reactions influence the response of the Jews? Above all, was that response effective? And did it bring with it any lasting change in attitudes or institutions?

I

Of all such episodes in the nineteenth century, by far the most significant was surely that involving the pogroms and the reaction to them in the years 1881–82. There are strong grounds for seeing here a decisive turning point. From then on can be dated the gradual but unbroken emergence of the new movements that, in constant rivalry and interaction, would transform the structure and content of Jewish politics – Jewish (Yiddish-speaking) socialism and populism, proto-Zionism (*Hibbat Zion*), and territorialism. On one side of the divide, according to this historiographical perception, was the era in which the Jews of Europe expected emancipation and worked for integration into the host societies; while, on the other stretched the era in which the goal was increasingly proclaimed to be autoemancipation, collective liberation, national self-determination.

Given that this thesis, however schematic and one-dimensional, is essentially correct (and there seems to be no adequate reason to doubt that it is), there still remain a number of related and fundamental questions facing the historian. In particular, it has to be asked in what relationship Jewish nationalism and socialism, increasingly important after 1881–82, stood to the politics that had previously predominated – to the “emancipationist” system on the one hand, and to the “traditional” on the other.¹

¹ For some recent essays on Jewish political traditions, see Daniel Elazar, ed., *Kinship and Consent: The Jewish Political Tradition and Its Contemporary Uses* (Washington, D.C., 1983). I am grateful to Eli Lederhendler, who has allowed me to read his work in progress: “From Autonomy to Autoemancipation: Russian Jewish Political Development

II

There are, of course, highly complex and emotive issues involved here. Indeed, to take just one important example, a reader turning for enlightenment on this subject to such a *locus classicus* as the essays (*Be-mifneh ha-dorot*) by the late Ben Zion Dinur will find it difficult, although perhaps not impossible, to reconcile the various strands of thought to be found there. Dinur saw the primary theme in modern Jewish history as the constant struggle within the collective organism between integrative and disintegrative, centripetal and centrifugal forces. Very much in the manner of Perez Smolenskin and Ahad Ha-Am, he described Westernization in Jewish life, the Berlin Haskalah, and the process of integration into the host societies during the nineteenth century in terms of self-denigration and, indeed, self-destruction.²

In the context of this struggle, Dinur discerned a number of disparate forces that nonetheless supplied Jewry with the vitality to survive. Most notably, he traced a new determination to resettle the Holy Land back to the late seventeenth century and saw there the beginnings of an unbroken process that would culminate eventually in Hibbat Zion and Herzlian Zionism. He dated the start of the modern period in Jewish history not from Baruch Spinoza or the Haskalah or the French Revolution but from about 1700, particularly from the *aliyah* in that year of Yehuda He-Hasid and his followers. Dinur discovered the modernity in this group of ultraobservant and, to all appearances, highly traditional Jews in their readiness to undertake the large-scale move to the Holy Land even before the coming of the Messiah.³ In sum, he stressed the high degree of continuity that in his view fused the nationalism of post-1881-82 with the rabbinic, self-enclosed but nonetheless (as he saw it) modern world of piety.

To round out the picture, Dinur could simply have emphasized those facts that illustrated the ever-growing inroads made by assimilation and disintegration in Western Jewry. But he was far too sensitive a historian to do that. And he duly noted the Jewish solidarity that manifested itself in such affairs as the Damascus case, the proliferation of the new and extensive Jewish press, and the establishment of such organizations as

in the 19th Century and Its Roots in the Public Life of Traditional Communities," a Ph.D. dissertation to be submitted to the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

² Ben Zion Dinur, *Be-mifneh ha-dorot: Mehkarim ve-iyunim be-reshitam shel ha-zmanim be-hadashim be-toldot Israel* (Jerusalem, 1972), pp. 9-18.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 26-29.

the Alliance Israélite Universelle.⁴ What remains unclarified is how these examples of communal vitality in the West could be explained. Were they merely the exception that proves the rule, or perhaps a reassertion of the collective subconscious still fed subterraneously from the sources of age-old tradition, or, again, a premonition of later nationalism? Had Dinur pursued this line of questioning further he might have modified his tendency to describe modernization and Haskalah as simply standing in direct negation to the forces of collective survival, to the continuum made up of traditional Judaism and Jewish nationalism.

As against Dinur's approach, it will be argued here that, in fact, the historian is best served by first conceptualizing the three categories under discussion – the traditional, the liberal or emancipationist, the postliberal or autoemancipationist – as strictly separate categories. Once they are initially held separate, as it were, the attempt can be made to trace the ways in which they interacted. Rather than Dinur's dichotomous analysis, the basic framework, then, becomes triadic, and the primary process, rather than linear, becomes dialectic – with a thesis (the traditional), an antithesis (emancipationism), and a synthesis (autoemancipationism).

But that can only be a beginning. To go a step further with Hegelian terminology, one stage is not only negated by the next but is also subsumed within it. A discontinuity, however sharp, can still encompass a high degree of continuity. Moreover, beyond this, it has to be remembered that the Jewish people during the nineteenth century increasingly took on the forms of voluntary association as the communities lost much of their autonomous (state-backed) power. Emergent movements, however popular or confident, did not have the means to crush or eliminate preexisting institutions and ways of thought. The old continued to exist side by side with the intermediate and the new. Internal revolution within the Jewish collectivity involved no bloodshed, no expropriation, not even in most cases any clear transfer of power, but rather the proliferation of rival power centers, movements, and ideologies. Such revolution is, indeed, very much more a historiographical construct than a clearly defined historical event.

III

Crises such as those of 1881–82 and 1840 indeed cannot be fully understood except in terms of constant interaction among the highly disparate,

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 36–46.

often hostile, forces at work within, and on the periphery of, the Jewish world. True, in the period from April 1881 until the summer of 1882, the most conspicuous development was the emergence, almost overnight, of a politics radical in thought and action, in content and style, within the Russian-Jewish world. A new phenomenon with the most far-reaching consequences, autoemancipationism has naturally riveted attention on itself.⁵ The emigrationist ideas, whether centered on a territory in North America or on Palestine, were, of course, not entirely new; but the widespread support now given them, in the wake of the pogroms, undoubtedly was. So, too, was the startling analysis of M. L. Lilienblum in his article of October 1881 in *Razsvet* (Dawn), where he argued that the high point of European liberalism had been passed and that the rising waves of extreme nationalism were bound, eventually, to make life simply untenable for an awkward minority such as the Jews.⁶

In the name of *Palestinstvo* (a proto-Zionism) and *Amerikanstvo* (a proto-territorialism), the intelligentsia challenged the political leadership of the St. Petersburg oligarchy (the Gintsburgs, the Poliakovs) and the spiritual leadership of the inward-looking rabbinical circles. It sought to assume these roles for itself.⁷ To mobilize public opinion, poets, writers, journalists, and students made remarkably effective, unprecedented use of the Jewish press, both in Hebrew and in Russian, as well as of mass petitions and synagogue demonstrations.⁸

The founding of the agricultural colonization parties or youth movements – Am Olam and the Bilu⁹ – did more than anything else to demonstrate the intense atmosphere of the times and the depth of the commitment. The dramatic departure of many hundreds of young men and

⁵ On the crisis of 1881–82, see, for example, Samuel Leib Zitron, *Toldot Hibat Zion*, vol. 1: *Me-reshit yeme ha-tnuah ad she-nitasher vaad Hoveve-Zion be-Odesah* (Odessa, 1914); Yisrael Klausner, *Be-hitorer am: Ha-aliah ha-rishonah me-Rusyah* (Jerusalem, 1962); David Vital, *The Origins of Zionism* (Oxford, 1975); Shmuel Yavnieli, ed., *Sefer ha-Zionut*, vol. 2: *Tkufat Hibat Zion* (Tel Aviv, 1942).

⁶ M. L. Lilienblum, "Obshcheevreiskii vopros i Palestina," *Razsvet*, nos. 41–42 (October 1881): 1598–1600, 1638–41.

⁷ For a broader survey of this development, see Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism and the Russian Jews, 1862–1917* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 57–64, 74–90.

⁸ See, e.g., Yehuda Slutsky, *Ha-itonut ha-yehudit-rusit ba-meah ha-tsha-esreh* (Jerusalem, 1970), pp. 121–41; M. Ben Hillel Ha-Cohen, *Olami*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem, 1927), pp. 164–66.

⁹ On Am Olam, see Avrom Menes, "The Am Oylom Movement," *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science* 4 (1949): 9–33; and Hasiyah Turtel, "Tnuat 'Am Olam," *Heavar* 10 (1963): 124–43. On the Bilu, see Shulamit Laskov, *Ha-Biluim* (Tel Aviv, 1979).

women determined to lay the foundations of a Jewish territory in the American West or in Palestine made a deep impression on Russian Jewry. Although the emigrants' grandiose schemes soon shattered on the rocks of harsh reality, the change in the nature of Russian-Jewish politics was to prove both permanent and profound.¹⁰

What took place in 1881–82, however, cannot be adequately described in these terms alone, even though the radically innovative developments surely represent the most important theme. The truth is that strands drawn from the traditional, premodern strata of Russian Jewry were thickly interwoven into the fabric of events at this juncture. The most obvious example, perhaps, is the fact that the great majority of the Jews who went to settle the land in Palestine in the early 1880s were fully observant Jews, many from Rumania, eager to maintain the ordinances as laid down by rabbinic law and, it would seem, moved to become colonists as the result of religious impulse. Of course, this does not mean that they would have contemplated so drastic and dangerous a move if the Jewish people in Eastern Europe had not been put into a state of extreme turmoil by the emigration debate. They were moved by the great expectations then current, but how far their motives were political rather than religious, even perhaps messianically inspired, remains very much an open question. Of all the many colonies then founded, only Gederah and, to some extent, Rishon le-Zion were recognizably the work of the radical intelligentsia.¹¹

Hardly less striking was the role played in key political ventures and innovations by a number of famous rabbis. The Hasidic movement, it is true, remained aloof, seeking to preserve its own way of life untouched by anything that smacked of secularism or modernization. (Only with the establishment of Agudat Israel in 1912 did the Hasidim adopt modern organizational means to attain that same ultraconservative end.) But among the Lithuanian Mitnagdim, the situation was different. There, cooperation with nonobservant or radical or even anticlerical Jews was not always automatically excluded. Thus, Rabbi Yitzhak Elkhanan Spector of Kovno, aided by his assistant Yaakov Halevi Lifshits, worked

¹⁰ For an analysis of the part played by members (later ex-members) of the Am Olam in America, see Ezra Mendelsohn, "The Russian Roots of the American Jewish Labor Movement," *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science* 16(1976): 150–77.

¹¹ On the development of the First Aliyah, see Mordechai Eliav and Yemima Rosenthal, *Sefer ha-aliyah ha-rishonah* (Jerusalem, 1981); and Yehoshua Kaniel, *Hemshekh utmura: Ha-yishuv ha-yashan ve-ha-yishuv he-hadash bi-tkufat ha-aliyah ha-rishonah ve-ha-shniyah* (Jerusalem, 1981).

together with such prominent *maskilim* as the poet Yehuda Leb Levin to ensure that detailed reports of the pogroms reached the Jews in the West. The two highly influential articles published on the subject in the *Times* of London in January 1882 were based on material smuggled out of Russia disguised as a rabbinical legal opinion printed in Hebrew.¹²

During the 1880s Spektor was among those rabbis who identified themselves with the emergent Hibbat Zion movement even though its most prominent leaders, such as Lilienblum and Lev Pinsker, were *maskilim* by origin and still, in large degree, by outlook. Numbered among these rabbis, too, were Naftali Zvi Berlin (head of the Volozhin Yeshivah), Mordekhay Eliasberg, and, of course, Shmuel Mohilever, who played a central role in the movement.

The nationalist intelligentsia and the more open strata within the traditional world strongly influenced each other.¹³ The enormous stir caused by the youth triggered off highly emotional reactions in wide circles where the Exodus from Egypt, the River Sambation, the Ten Lost Tribes, and the Mountains of Darkness were very much part of a real world still saturated with messianic expectations.¹⁴ A mass following – a *narod* – was thus there ready at hand for the new claimants to leadership. But there was a price to be paid. Many of the *maskilim*, now full-fledged nationalists, had come out initially in favor of a territory in the New World where the Jews, in their view, would best be able to build a modern and liberal society free from theocratic or theological aspirations and clerical interference. But men such as Yehuda Leb Levin, Lev Levanda, Ludwig Zamenhof, and Lev Pinsker soon went over to the pro-Palestine camp, yielding to the power of a popular sentiment.

However, a three-dimensional analysis of 1881–82 cannot ignore the decisive impact made likewise by the intervention and the image of Western Jewry. The great debate on organized emigration – its necessity, advisability, and destination – was sparked off in large part in the summer of 1881 by rumors of a decision supposedly taken by the Alliance Israélite Universelle to pay the passage of Russian Jews to America. This rumor contained only a small kernel of truth; the Alliance was thinking in terms

¹² On this episode, see Yaakov Halevi Lifshits, *Zikhron Yaakov* (Frankfurt a.M., 1924), 3:20–89.

¹³ For a valuable insight into this interaction, see the massive correspondence reproduced in A. A. Drouyanov, ed., *Ktavim le-toldot Hibat Zion ve-yishuv Eretz Israel* (Odessa, 1919; Tel Aviv, 1932).

¹⁴ See, e.g., Shmarya Levin, *Youth in Revolt* (London, 1939), pp. 30–35.

of a strictly limited project.¹⁵ Yet so great was the belief in the almost unlimited influence and power of the Jewish plutocracy in the West that the realities of the situation made little difference. The Russian-Jewish intelligentsia and, even more perhaps, the masses were convinced that, in the last resort, they could count on Western Jewry to underwrite their plans and projects.

Furthermore, in this relationship, too, the actions of each group fed those of the other. The Alliance was, in fact, stampeded by the massive flow of refugees across the frontier into paying for far more Jews to cross the Atlantic than it had planned. This action served to fuel the expectations of Russian Jewry still more. And hope was further stimulated, later in 1881, by the news that the Hebrew Emigrant Aid Society had been founded in New York and that Baron Maurice de Hirsch had apparently offered a million francs to advance Jewish agricultural settlement overseas.¹⁶

In turn, the reports smuggled out by Rabbi Yitzhak Elkhanan Spektor and his group, once published in the *Times*, helped produce a major movement of public protest in England early in 1882. Its high point was the meeting at the Mansion House, presided over by the Lord Mayor of London and addressed by, *inter alia*, Cardinal Henry Edward Manning and the earl of Shaftesbury, that resulted in the collection of large sums of money for aid to Russian Jewry.¹⁷ Thus the pattern of 1881 was largely repeated in the spring of 1882. Once again, hopes of a grandiose emigration scheme soared; new parties and movements were founded; and the representatives of Anglo-Jewry found themselves arranging the transport and passage of thousands of Russian Jews, including the main Am Olam groups, to the United States.

Amid all this unprecedented flurry of activity, one episode perhaps stands out as exceptionally revealing. Among the emissaries chosen by the chief rabbi, Samuel Montagu, and other members of the Mansion House Committee, was Laurence Oliphant, an English gentleman and eccentric who, like so many Victorian men of letters, was chronically attracted to bizarre social experiments in utopian living, communalism, and free love.

¹⁵ On the initial plans of the Alliance in the summer of 1881, see Alliance Israélite Universelle, *Bulletin mensuel*, no. 10 (October 1881): 161; *American Hebrew*, September 8, 1881, p. 33; *Jewish Chronicle*, October 7, 1881, p. 7.

¹⁶ *Jewish Chronicle*, October 7, 1881, p. 7.

¹⁷ "The Mansion House Meeting," *Jewish Chronicle*, February 3, 1882, pp. 1-4, and February 17, 1882, p. 3.

Oliphant came from an intensely evangelical family, and in 1880 he had published a detailed book that laid forth plans for the restoration of the Jews to Palestine.¹⁸ His presence in Brody as an emissary of the Mansion House Committee, and later in Constantinople, was followed with great interest by the Jews in Russia. It was confidently predicted that he would gain the Holy Land for the Jews by diplomatic means or even by personal purchase. Messianic longings were drawn to him as though to a magnet, and his mere presence at the center of the stage helped sustain the confidence of the Bilu and other such groups into the summer of 1882.

Myths, focused primarily on Western Jewry – but also as in this case on Christians – played a crucial role in the formation of the new Jewish politics. Yet, like prophecies, myths are often self-fulfilling. A number of the leading Jewish bankers were now inspired to devote large sums to Jewish colonization and agrarian efforts. Jacob Schiff financed settlements in America on a modest scale; Maurice de Hirsch would soon undertake his massive colonization effort in South America; Baron Edmund de Rothschild was induced, following meetings with Rabbi Shmuel Mohilever and with Yosef Feinberg from Rishon le-Zion, to underwrite the new colonies in Palestine. Without his support, they would have collapsed.¹⁹ Thus, the nationalist movement was sustained not only by the radically new but, in essential ways, by forces drawn from both the traditional and the Western subworlds within Jewry.

IV

While the crisis of 1881–82 has been the subject of intense historiographical interest almost throughout the twentieth century,²⁰ the Damascus case has attracted comparatively little close attention. The one overall account that goes into considerable detail remains Heinrich Graetz's very impressive chapter in his *History of the Jews* written more than one hundred

¹⁸ Laurence Oliphant, *Land of Gilead, with Excursions in the Lebanon* (Edinburgh, 1880).

¹⁹ See, for example, Dan Giladi, "Ha-baron, ha-pkidut ve-ha-moshavot ha-rishonot be-Eretz Israel: Haarakhah me-hadash," *Cathedra* 2 (1976): 59–68; and Simon Schama, *Two Rothschilds and the Land of Israel* (New York, 1978).

²⁰ Suffice it to mention Drouyanov, Zitron, Yavnieli, Breiman, and Klausner. See, in addition to the works listed in nn. 5 and 13, Shlomo Breiman, "Ha-mifneh ba-mahshavah ha-ziburit ha-yehudit be-reshit shnot ha-shmonim," *Shivat Zion* 2–3 (1951–52): 83–227.

years ago, although it should, perhaps, be added that J. M. Jost also gave considerable attention to the case.²¹ A number of specialized articles illuminate limited aspects of the affair without making any attempt to discuss its overall significance;²² and it is not assigned much space in the general histories.

Up to a point, this neglect by historians is justified. The Damascus case was surely more a landmark than a crossroads; it cannot compare in importance with the crisis in Russia some forty years later. Yet, when all is said and done, the events of 1840 absorbed the attention of world Jewry and riveted non-Jewish interest upon the Jews in ways probably without example between 1815 and the 1870s or 1880s. The space assigned to the case by Graetz and Jost reflected contemporary opinion. And the subsequent decline in interest has, surely, to be explained in part by the fact that modern Jewish history has increasingly been written in the twentieth century from the nationalist vantage point.

The degree of solidarity displayed by the organized Jewish communities in France, England, the United States, and, in more passive ways, in Germany, and the forces that they mobilized on behalf of their brethren in Damascus and Rhodes do not easily fit into accounts that (like Dinur's) place the greatest emphasis on the assimilation and communal decline of Western Jewry. Thus an untypical statement by Abraham Geiger has received inordinate attention. In a private letter not published until 1896, Geiger declared that "for me it is more important that Jews be able to work in Prussia as pharmacists or lawyers than that the entire Jewish population of Asia and Africa be saved, although as a human being I

²¹ Heinrich Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, vol. 11 (Leipzig, 1900), pp. 464–500, published in English as *History of the Jews* (Philadelphia, 1895; reprint, 1956) 6:632–66; J. M. Jost, *Neuere Geschichte der Israeliten von 1815 bis 1845*, vol. 2 (Berlin, 1847), pp. 345–84, vol. 10, pt. 2 of Jost's *Geschichte der Israeliten seit der Zeit der Maccabäer bis auf unsere Tage*.

²² Albert M. Hyamson, "The Damascus Affair, 1840," *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England* 16 (1952): 47–71; N. M. Gelber, "Österreich und die Damaskusaffäre im Jahre 1840," *Jahrbuch der Jüdisch-Literarischen Gesellschaft* 18 (1927): 217–64; S. W. Baron, "Abraham Benisch's Project for Jewish Colonization in Palestine (1842)," in *Jewish Studies in Memory of George A. Kohut*, ed. S. W. Baron and Alexander Marx (New York, 1935), pp. 72–85. See also three new studies: U. R. Q. Henriques, "Who Killed Father Thomas?" in *Sir Moses Montefiore: A Symposium*, ed. V. D. Lipman (Oxford, 1982), pp. 50–75; Tudor Parfitt, "'The Year of the Pride of Israel': Montefiore and the Blood Libel of 1840," in *The Century of Moses Montefiore*, ed. S. L. and V. D. Lipman (Oxford, 1985), pp. 131–48; Jane S. Gerber, "The Damascus Blood Libel – Jewish Perceptions and Responses," in *Proceedings of the Eighth World Congress of Jewish Studies (Division B)* (Jerusalem, 1982), pp. 105–10.

sympathize with them.”²³ There is a tendency to portray the action of the Jews in 1840 either as a throwback to traditional norms (Moses Montefiore, for example, being described as the last in the line of *shtadlanim*)²⁴ or else as a reaction against the prevailing norm. As S. M. Dubnov put it, the case brought with it a reassertion of

Jewish self-consciousness at a time when West European Jewry had yielded to the charms of assimilation and disintegrated and split up into groups of Frenchmen, Englishmen, Germans of the Mosaic faith. . . . [It] was the beginning of later attempts to consolidate Jewry at first for philanthropical, cultural and political mutual aid, and later for a national ideal.²⁵

But here, again, it is surely preferable not to merge the like with the unlike. The Damascus Affair offered the Jews of the West the opportunity, in coming to the aid of two distant communities in dire distress, to march under the standard of a liberalism triumphant. They were acting, as they saw it, in accord with, not in contradiction to, the spirit of the times. Even if Judaism were to be defined strictly in religious terms, stripped of national connotations – and very many Jews were in fact reluctant to make so clear a distinction – its adherents could still recognize a duty to assist their “co-religionists” endangered by arbitrary tyranny and barbarism. Indeed, the Damascus case is precisely of interest as the first full-scale example within the Jewish world of the emancipationist style of politics.

In the campaign, which was launched soon after the news of the blood libels, tortures, and terror in Damascus and Rhodes reached Europe in April 1840, the arguments and the means employed had very little in common with those traditionally associated with the *shtadlan*. Adolphe Crémieux, Moses Montefiore, and the many other Jewish spokesmen chose to take their stand as members of European civilization, equally entitled with all other citizens (even if not fully emancipated in England) to appeal to the rights of man. They chose their methods accordingly. In large part, they acted out in the open, determined, as it was so often put at the time, to win their case before “the court of public opinion.” A flow of letters to the editor was maintained. As documents came in from

²³ “Abraham Geigers Briefe an J. Derenbourg [November 22, 1840],” *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* 60, no. 24 (June 12, 1896): 284.

²⁴ See, e.g., Howard Sachar, *The Course of Modern Jewish History* (New York, 1958), pp. 133–36.

²⁵ S. M. Dubnov, *Noveishaia istoriia evreiskogo naroda ot frantsuzskoi revoliutsii do nashikh dnei*, vol. 2 (Riga, 1938), p. 241, published in English as *The History of the Jews*, vol. 5 (London, 1973), p. 250.

the Middle East, they were translated, distributed to the press, and published. Politicians and ministers were lobbied officially in London, Paris, Washington, and these efforts, too, were made public. It was arranged for questions to be asked in Parliament and in the Chambers of Deputies and Peers; the subsequent exchanges, too, were reported and became cause for comment in the press. On July 3, 1840, a protest meeting was held in the Mansion House, and the Lord Mayor followed it up by sending appeals to the various governments of Europe; again the correspondence was published.²⁶ Public subscriptions were launched to help finance the mission of Montefiore and Crémieux to the Middle East, and this undertaking in turn was given maximal publicity.²⁷

The results of that expedition were also carefully packaged with an eye to effect. In its own terms, it was actually a failure in that it had gone out with the express purpose of arranging a full inquiry and fair trial, which it was unable to do. But Montefiore and Crémieux, making the best use of the firmans issued by Mehemet Ali and the sultan, did all they could – and quite effectively – to present the expedition as a triumphant success.

Of course, it was easier to conduct such a campaign in England, where the government, and especially Lord Palmerston, the foreign secretary, supported the Jewish cause, than in France, where the government of Adolphe Thiers, hostile and embarrassed by the case, sought to keep it out of the public eye.²⁸ That Crémieux, with the backing of the Consistoire Central, was ready to persist in the cause, even in defiance of his own government, demonstrates how little there was here of traditional *shtadlanut*. Crémieux – a brilliant advocate, vice-president of the Consistoire, well known for his persistent opposition to the use of the *more Judaico* (Jewish oath), a dedicated liberal who was named minister of justice after the February Revolution – was ready to defy Thiers in the name of French values, as he understood them.²⁹ Rather like Gabriel Riesser, who a few years before had brought out his journal *Der Jude* as a blow on behalf of a liberal Germany, Crémieux saw Jewish solidarity in the right cause as the highest expression of French patriotism.³⁰

²⁶ “Persecution of the Jews in Damascus: Great Meeting at the Mansion House,” *Times* (London), July 4, 1840; “The Jews in the East,” *ibid.*, July 24, 1840.

²⁷ On the mission, see *Diaries of Sir Moses and Lady Montefiore*, ed. Louis Loewe (London, 1890); and *The Damascus Affair: Diary of Louis Loewe, July–November, 1840* (Ramsgate, 1940).

²⁸ See the official statements by Adolphe Thiers, “Chambre des Deputés,” *Journal des Debats*, June 3, 1840, and “Chambre des Pairs,” *ibid.*, July 11, 1840.

²⁹ See Solomon Posener, *Adolphe Crémieux: A Biography* (Philadelphia, 1940).

³⁰ See, for example, Moshe Rinott, “Gabriel Riesser: Fighter for Jewish Emancipation,” *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 7 (1962): 11–38.

This argument is by no means meant to imply that the Western Jewish leaders were acting solely out of motives of abstract ideology or pure altruism. On the contrary, they themselves were often ready to admit that the accusations leveled against the Jewish communities of Damascus and Rhodes, if only because they were so widely credited in Europe, constituted a direct threat to their own interests and security.³¹ As they saw it, the struggle of enlightened reason against medieval reaction and Judeophobia, which they tended, overschematically, to identify in large measure with forces within the Roman Catholic church, was one and indivisible.

Still, the story of the Jews in 1840, like that of 1881–82, incorporated not only a major but also minor themes. The principal actors may not have acted as *shtadlanim*, but it is well to remember how close many in that generation of Western Jewry were to a traditional way of life. A decisive role in the Damascus Affair was played by the Rothschild family, whose connections with the European governments in London, Paris, Naples, and, above all perhaps, Vienna were invaluable. Without its moral and financial backing, provided largely but not always behind the scenes, the campaign could never have won such broad support or achieved such success. Indeed, the fact that Montefiore was a close relative made it something of a family affair.

But at that time the Rothschilds were still almost literally only one step out of the ghetto. Anselm, of course, was still in the family home in the Jewish quarter of Frankfurt am Main and strictly observant. Solomon, in Vienna, although enjoying the title of baron, usually lived in a hotel because Jews were denied the right of permanent residence within the city. James, in Paris, disowned his niece in London when in 1840 she entered into the first mixed marriage in family history. Much of the correspondence, including that of its younger members, was still conducted in Yiddish, replete with Hebraisms.³² It is thus hardly surprising that their almost instinctive reaction to the Damascus Affair was little different

³¹ See, e.g., the speech of Bernard Van Oven at the meeting in the Great Synagogue on June 23, 1840: "We must put an end to the persecution in Asia, and if possible punish the persecutors, lest their success should encourage similar attempts nearer home, where there is enough, and more than enough, to stimulate bigotry and to tempt avarice." *Morning Herald* (London), June 25, 1840.

³² Two recent additions to the large number of historical works on the Rothschild family are Anka Muhlstein, *Baron James: The Rise of the French Rothschilds* (New York, 1982); and R. W. Davis, *The English Rothschilds* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1983). I wish to take this opportunity to thank N. M. Rothschild and Sons, London, for kindly permitting me to consult the archive of the bank, and Mrs. Yvonne Moss, the archivist, for her great help in locating much relevant material.

from that which would have been expected of such Jews so exalted by wealth throughout the centuries. And, indeed, the same can be said of the community leaders in Constantinople and Alexandria, who responded at once to the calls for help and were able to achieve much for the hapless victims in Damascus and Rhodes long before intervention from Europe could make itself felt.

Again, in 1840 as in 1881–82, messianic expectations and impulses of the most varied kind came into play. First, there was the fact – pure coincidence, it would seem – that 5600 in the Jewish calendar (corresponding to 1839–40) had been awaited for decades by many rabbinic and kabbalistic authorities as the year of the messianic coming. Were the tragic events in Damascus and Rhodes, then, a sign of the times, or birthpangs?³³

What the Jews, especially the most orthodox and observant, did and thought was, in turn, closely followed by the English Christian missionaries, particularly by the London Society for the Promotion of Christianity among the Jews, which had dozens of posts scattered across Europe and the Middle East. In these circles, too, millenarian hopes flourished and the restoration of the Jews to Palestine was often seen as the necessary prelude to the second advent of Christ. It was hoped that when the Jewish Messiah failed to come in 1840, conversions to Christianity would greatly increase. In March of that year one of the missionaries in Jerusalem, G. W. Pieritz, a convert from Judaism, went specially to Damascus to seek ways of aiding the Jews there, and his written reports published in Europe exerted great influence precisely because he was considered an unbiased source.³⁴

Intervention by millenarian societies and leaders in London with the British government followed two directions. They called for the defense of the Jews in Damascus and Rhodes, here working along the same lines as the Anglo-Jewish community. But they also took the opportunity provided by the Jewish plight and the impending war against Egypt for the control of greater Syria (including Palestine) to urge restorationist policies on the British government. As Anthony Ashley Cooper, soon to become

³³ On the year 5600 as a messianic year, see A. G. Duker, "The Tarniks," in *The Joshua Starr Memorial Volume* (New York, 1953), pp. 191–202; and Aryeh Morgenshtern, *Meshibiyut ve-yishuv Eretz Israel ba-mahazit ha-rishonah shel ha-meah ha-19* (Jerusalem, 1985).

³⁴ See "Extract of Letters from Mr. Pieritz, a Christian Missionary Living at Jerusalem, to the Jews at Alexandria," *Times* (London), July 6, 1840, supp.; and a further report from Pieritz, *ibid.*, August 13, 1840.

the seventh earl of Shaftesbury, was not only the most prominent evangelical advocate of the Jewish restoration to Palestine but also Palmerston's stepson-in-law, such proposals were not dismissed out of hand.³⁵ On the contrary, in a well-known dispatch of August 1840 to the British ambassador to the Porte, Palmerston suggested that the Turkish government should be encouraged to promote large-scale Jewish settlement in Palestine.

There exists at present among the Jews dispersed over Europe a strong notion that the Time is approaching when their nation is to return to Palestine; and . . . their thoughts have been bent more upon the means of realizing that wish. . . . It would be of manifest importance to the Sultan to encourage the Jews to return to, and to settle in, Palestine: because the wealth which they would bring with them would increase the resources of the Sultan's Dominions.³⁶

Given the fact that the vast majority of European Jews were then living either closed within the premodern world of Eastern Europe or had set their sights firmly on equal citizenship and integration, they could hardly be expected, in the main, to welcome the many projects of this nature then being mooted and publicized in England.³⁷ Most Jews simply ignored them. Some rejected them in anger, as did Ludwig Philippson, for example.³⁸ But there were also those who welcomed them with great excitement. A man like Yehuda Alkalai, still thinking largely in kabbalistic terms, saw in them a sign of the oncoming messianic age.³⁹

More remarkable was the reaction of significant groups within the younger generation of German and Austrian Jewry, particularly the

³⁵ See Edwin Hodder, *The Life and Work of the Seventh Earl of Shaftesbury*, K.G. (London, 1887); and the diary of Lord Ashley deposited at the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, Chancery Lane, London.

³⁶ Quoted in Albert M. Hyamson, *The British Consulate in Jerusalem in Relation to the Jews of Palestine, 1838-1914*, vol. 1 (London, 1939), pp. 33-34.

³⁷ Two recent books on the nature of Anglo-Jewish society and politics are Todd M. Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England, 1714-1830: Tradition and Change in a Liberal Society* (Philadelphia, 1979); and M. C. N. Salbstein, *The Emancipation of the Jews in Britain: The Question of the Admission of the Jews to Parliament, 1828-1860* (Rutherford, N.J., 1982).

³⁸ [Ludwig Philippson], "Tages-Controle," *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* 4, no. 37 (September 12, 1840): 544. Philippson wrote of proto-Zionist plans: "And what would a pitiful [Jewish] Free State be able to create in an empty corner except a trivial questionable existence amidst Muslims and Egyptians? What would a colony of homeless Jews be able to do? It would exist only by the grace of distant Powers . . . without purpose or direction."

³⁹ E.g., Jacob Katz, "The Jewish National Movement: A Sociological Analysis," in his *Emancipation and Assimilation: Studies in Modern Jewish History* (Farnborough, England, 1972), pp. 129-45, esp. pp. 133-34.

students. Frustrated by the lack of progress toward emancipation, shocked to the marrow by the widespread abuse heaped on the Jews in the German press during the Damascus case, they saw in the Palestine projects a welcome ray of light. It was at this point that Moses Hess wrote his article on the return of the Jews to Palestine, which he then put aside for more than twenty years, only to publish it finally as part of *Rome and Jerusalem*.⁴⁰

The group led by Abraham Benisch, Moritz Steinschneider, and Albert Löwy was, of course, far more determined and resolute. Following meetings with Crémieux and Montefiore, they managed to have a detailed memorandum submitted to the Foreign Office in London through the good offices of W. T. Young, the British vice-consul in Jerusalem.⁴¹ What is more, one of the German-Jewish periodicals, *Der Orient*, edited by Dr. Julius Fürst, published their ideas frequently and at length. Of course nothing concrete could come of such projects at that time; they were clearly premature. Nonetheless, it is certainly significant that what can only be categorized as autoemancipationist themes were taken up so readily among the German-Jewish intelligentsia of the 1840s – a startling reminder of how often radical ideas that first caught on in the Germany of pre-1848 were to emerge again in the Russia of post-1881.

The Damascus case was by no means the high point of the emancipationist model of Jewish politics. Following the Mortara case of 1858, those politics took on permanent, institutional form with the establishment of the Alliance Israélite Universelle in 1860. Affiliated organizations, the Allianz in Berlin and in Vienna and the Anglo-Jewish Association in London were set up in the following years. As Michael Graetz has demonstrated so convincingly, the Alliance was initially the work of a group of men who had been influenced by theories of radical change and perceived Judaism as essentially a universalist system of social ethics.⁴² It was natural enough that Crémieux should have become its president and, likewise, that its differences with the Consistoire and the Rothschilds should have been quickly reconciled. Over the next two decades the Alliance was active in the establishment of modern Jewish schools in the Middle East, a project

⁴⁰ See Moses Hess, *Rom und Jerusalem: Die letzte Nationalitätsfrage* (Leipzig, 1862), pp. 26–28.

⁴¹ Baron, “Abraham Benisch’s Project,” pp. 77–82; Hyamson, *British Consulate in Jerusalem*, 1:41.

⁴² Michael Graetz, *Ha-periferyah haytah le-merkaz: Prakim be-toldot yahadut Zarfat ba-meah ha-19* (Jerusalem, 1982).

launched by Crémieux in Egypt in 1840; in diplomacy, particularly its action on behalf of Rumanian Jewry culminating in the settlement at the Congress of Berlin;⁴³ in Palestine, with the foundation of the Mikveh Israel agricultural school; and in the Russian Empire, with the aid for selected emigrants to the United States in 1869–70.

All these projects were seen as an expression of the liberal, the emancipationist creed of Western Jewry. When 1881–82 came, the leaders of the new Jewish nationalism in Russia turned to the West with quite other expectations. They were to be sorely disappointed – but not entirely.

⁴³ See, e.g., L. P. Gartner, "Roumania, America and World Jewry: Consul Peixotta in Bucharest 1870–1876," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 58 (1968–69): 25–117; and F. R. Stern, *Gold and Iron: Bismarck, Bleichröder and the Building of the German Empire* (New York, 1977).

Jewish Politics and the Press

The “Reception” of the Alliance Israélite Universelle (1860)

It has become something of a truism by now to argue that the emergence of the Jewish press in the mid-nineteenth century was a development of the most crucial importance in modern Jewish history. This perception owes much to such innovative works as Eli Lederhendler’s *The Road to Modern Jewish Politics*, which described the role played by a number of papers – *Hamagid*, edited by David Gordon and *Hameliz* edited by Aleksandr Tsederbaum, for example – as a pivotal factor in the consolidation of an alternative, modern, leadership able eventually to challenge the traditional Jewish elites within the Russian empire.¹ In his recent history of the *Jewish Chronicle* David Cesarani summed up what is today a widely accepted view: “By linking Jews around the world and defining their common concerns, the Jewish press played a primary role in the evolution of a modern form of Jewish solidarity and ethnic identity.”²

Curiously enough, this weighty emphasis on the press as a key factor in shaping Jewish identity and politics in the modern era appears to be very much a phenomenon of recent origin. A glance at the classic works of Jewish historiography by Graetz, Dubnov and Baron reveals that they virtually ignored the emergence of the Jewish press as a topic in its own right. Jost paid the subject only marginally more attention;³ and even

¹ Eli Lederhendler, *The Road to Modern Jewish Politics: Political Tradition and Political Reconstruction in the Jewish Community of Tsarist Russia* (New York, 1989), pp. 84–157.

² David Cesarani, *The Jewish Chronicle and Anglo-Jewry 1841–1991* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 31.

³ J. Markus Jost, *Geschichte des Judenthums und seiner Secten*, vol. 3 (Leipzig, 1858), pp. 354–359.

Previously published in *Jewish History*, vol. 14 (2000), pp. 29–50.

Ettinger devoted no more than half a page in his history to the press per se.⁴

It is certainly not the purpose of this paper to argue for some kind of revisionist reversal to this benign neglect of an earlier era. On the contrary, Baruch Mevorah was surely correct to focus the spotlight – as he did in his pioneering article of 1959⁵ – on the remarkably rapid growth of the Jewish periodical press in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. The figures speak for themselves. In 1838 there was only one Jewish journal in the world which carried a substantial quantity of news, the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*; by 1846, the number had risen to eighteen, with eight published in Germany and ten elsewhere in the world. The total number of Jewish periodical publications of all kinds produced world-wide in the years 1835–1840 was eighteen;⁶ by 1880, it was estimated to have risen to over one hundred.⁷

At the same time, though, it does give one pause to consider how puny the Jewish press actually was when set against the extraordinary growth of the press as a whole, which was often described at the time as one of the world's "Great Powers."⁸ Many Jewish journals opened one year only to close the next (such was the fate, for example, of the Russian-language papers, *Razsvet* and *Sion* in 1860–1861). They were usually underfunded and understaffed, often little more than the single-handed product of the editor. Circulation figures are rarely available, but the ones that are known reveal that at mid-century even the most influential journals tended to sell in the hundreds rather than the thousands. Thus, the *Archives Israélites* had some four hundred subscribers in 1841; the *Occident* published by Isaac Leeser in Philadelphia had five hundred in 1845; the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* in 1850 had seven hundred, the *Orient* five hundred and fifty; and the *Razsvet*, ten years later, six hundred and forty.⁹ In his book of 1881, published in Vienna, *Presse und Judenthum*, Isidor Singer maintained that in Germany and Austria even rabbis often chose to do without a Jewish journal, considering it

⁴ Shmuel Ettinger in H. H. Ben-Sasson, *A History of the Jewish People* (Cambridge, MA, 1976), p. 849.

⁵ Barukh Mevorah, "Ikvotehah shel 'alilat Damesek behitpathuta shel ha'itonut hayehudit bashanim 1840–1846", *Zion*, pp. 23–24 (1958–1959), pp. 46–65.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

⁷ "Press," *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem, 1971), vol. 13, p. 1023.

⁸ E.g.: Isidor Singer, *Presse und Judenthum* (Wien, 1882), p. 24.

⁹ For these figures, see: Mevorah, "Ikvotehah shel 'alilat Damesek", p. 56; Joachim Kirchner, *Das deutsche Zeitschriftenwesen* (Wiesbaden, 1962), vol. 2, p. 147; Yehuda Slutsky, *Ha'itonut hayehudit-rusit bameah hatsba 'e'srei* (Jerusalem, 1970), p. 46.

quite sufficient to subscribe to a general newspaper.¹⁰ Even though the Jewish population world-wide is estimated to have reached as high as five million by mid-century, the circulation of the mainstream Jewish journals (those carrying news) had by then very possibly not reached a combined total of even ten thousand.

Given this extraordinarily low figure – in contrast, the *Forverts* alone would be selling some two hundred thousand copies daily in 1914 – it can well be asked if there is not a danger of going from one extreme to another, of overestimating the importance of the Jewish press at what was still very much an embryonic stage of its growth? All things considered, the answer to this question should, I believe, be decidedly in the negative.

There are a number of factors which should be set against the minuscule size of the sales. First, it has to be remembered that, especially in Eastern Europe where few could afford the cost of a journal, a single copy of *Hamagid*, *Hameliz*, *Hakarmel* or *Kol Mevasser*, would often be passed from hand to hand during the course of the week, thus multiplying the real, as opposed to the formal, circulation many times over. Moreover, in what was for most of the Jewish people still very much a face-to-face society – the massive movement from rural to metropolitan areas had not yet reached full speed – news and views originating in the press (both Jewish and general) would be passed on rapidly by word of mouth in the synagogue, *besmedresh* or market place. (What a turmoil was let loose in the *besmedresh* of Mendele's Teterivka as the assembled company found themselves divided angrily into camps over the Crimean War, one supporting Aunt Vita – that is, Queen Victoria; another Russia; a third Ishmael, the Turks; and yet a fourth, Napoleon).¹¹

Beyond this, it can be argued that the issue of circulation per se can be over-emphasized. What gave the Jewish press its exceptional importance in the mid-nineteenth century was the fact that it created public, supra-communal arenas where editors and contributors could exchange information and ideas in front of their respective audiences. To some extent, these arenas were self-contained, each formed by the given journal with its particular ideological stance, its specific geographical situation and its choice of language. But, at the same time, and to an increasing extent, the Jewish press came to transcend national, linguistic and sectarian divisions, creating, as it were, a world-wide forum in which those Jewish elites

¹⁰ Singer, *Presse und Judenthum*, p. 5.

¹¹ [Shalom Yaakov Abramovich], "Masa'ot Binyamin hashlishi", *Kol kitvei Mendeli mokher sefarim* (Tel-Aviv, 1947), p. 71.

willing to enter the modern world (and they included neo-Orthodox and even some ultra-Orthodox circles) circulated news, debated and polemicalised, often angrily.¹² It is thus no wonder that from the very first, the editors involved were transformed almost overnight into public celebrities and potential leaders. (Suffice it here to recall, for example, that the Russian Minister of Education, Count Uvarov, on the advice of the young Max Lilienthal, turned for advice on his plans for modernised Jewish schools not only to Montefiore and Crémieux, but also to Ludwig Philippson, the editor of the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, and Markus Jost, editor of the *Israelitische Annalen*.)¹³

It is our aim in this paper to examine a single test-case – the initial “reception” given the foundation of the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* by the Jewish press world-wide in order to see how the various papers reacted and interacted in the face of that pivotal event.¹⁴ The materials (a Statement of Goals or *Exposé*; a Manifesto – “Appel à tous les Israélites”; and a set of draft Statutes)¹⁵ sent out across the world by the new organization in July 1860 were, after all, liable by their very nature to prove highly controversial.

The Jews in most countries of Europe had as of then still not been granted equal rights and even where they had been emancipated (France, Belgium, Holland, Britain) they were still – perhaps, even more – anxious to prove their absolute loyalty to the states in which they lived. But the Alliance loudly proclaimed its aim to unite the Jews across the world (or, in the words of the Statement, the goal was to create a “link, a solidarity, from country to country embracing in its vast network all that is Jewish [*Israélite*]”).¹⁶ Would not so bold a stress on the international

¹² Cf. Benedict Anderson’s influential formulations regarding “print capitalism” and the role of newspapers in forming a sense of community; e.g.: “the newspaper reader, observing exact replicas of his own paper being consumed by his subway, barbershop, or residential neighbours, is continually reassured that the imagined world is visibly rooted in everyday life” (*Imagined Communities* [London, 1991], pp. 35–36).

¹³ See, e.g.: Julius Hessen, *Die russische Regierung und die westeuropäischen Juden: Zur Schulreform in Russland 1840–1844* (St. Petersburg, 1913), pp. 8–16, 31–35.

¹⁴ On the establishment of the Alliance, see, for example: Michael Graetz, *The Jews in Nineteenth Century France: From the French Revolution to the Alliance Israélite Universelle* (Stanford, CA, 1996), pp. 249–288; André Chouraqui, *L’Alliance israélite universelle et la renaissance juive contemporaine* (Paris, 1965), pp. 19–46; and Paula Hyman, *The Jews of Modern France* (Berkeley, 1998), pp. 77–90.

¹⁵ See, e.g.: *Alliance israélite universelle* (Paris, 1860) containing the *Exposé*, pp. 5–17; the “Appel à tous les israélites”, pp. 18–21; and the “Statuts”, pp. 22–25.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

character of the Jewish people be received with suspicion, or hostility, by a Jewish press committed primarily to the cause of emancipation within the given nation-state? Again, the rhetoric of the organization drew strongly from the traditions of political radicalism, upholding the French revolution as the fountainhead of Jewish liberation. ("It was in France that there originated the irresistible public movement in favor of freedom of conscience; what lent that movement so great and broad an impetus were the principles of 1789.")¹⁷ How would this appeal to the values of the French Left (or, at least, Center-Left) go down across the Rhine, the Vistula or the Channel? Would the censorship even allow its publication in tsarist Russia or the Habsburg empires? And what would the Orthodox papers, locked in battle against the forces of religious Reform, make of the claim that "to see all the living forces in Judaism united will prove to be an honor for [our] religion, a lesson for the peoples [of the world], a contribution to the progress of humanity, a triumph for universal truth and universal reason"?¹⁸

In its Statement of Goals, the Alliance had put great stress on what it described as the extraordinary importance of the press. On the one side, there was the power of the daily (the general) newspapers, the court of "public opinion," to which the Jews could appeal at moments of crisis such as the recent, and on-going, Mortara case. Here was

an invaluable lever to remove the mountains of hostile prejudice. This is a force of only recent creation – one which was not at the free disposal of our fathers. We, in a more fortunate position, must make ever greater efforts to avail ourselves of it. . . . At every moment, there are facts to reveal, accusations to refute, truths to spread.¹⁹

And, on the other side, were the Jewish journals, published in many different countries, which if systematically collected and scanned would form the basis for

a centre of information drawn from across the world with regard to the position of our co-religionists; the exclusionary laws to which they are subject; the acts of oppression from which they suffer; the efforts they make to free themselves from, or at least to lighten, their heavy yoke; their claims to our sympathy; the assistance which they require.²⁰

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 10; cf. the Manifesto which declared that "the principles of 1789 are all-powerful in the world; [that] the law which emanates therefrom is that of justice; [that] its spirit is destined to penetrate everywhere; and [that] the example of those peoples which enjoy the absolute equality of religion exercises a powerful effect" (ibid., p. 20).

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 9.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 10.

Such ambitious plans would no doubt be seen as flattering by the Jewish editors scattered across the globe, but this in itself could not guarantee a positive response to the basic concept of the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* (or the *Universal Israelitish Alliance*, as it was referred to in the English-speaking world).

And the truth is that the reception given to the foundation of the Alliance by the Jewish press was mixed, ranging from the extremely enthusiastic to the skeptical and the hostile. However, taken over all, the positive far outweighed the negative. This might seem surprising in light of the thesis so often advanced by historians that the modernizing Jews of the mid-century – Frenchmen or Germans or Poles of the “Mosaic persuasion” – were determined to prove their patriotism and right to civil equality at home even at the expense of Jewish solidarity abroad.

In reality, though, and at the time, it was rare to find support in the Jewish press for this concept of the *quid pro quo* (sometimes described by historians as an implicit “contract” or “bargain”).²¹ On the contrary, as demonstrated unequivocally in France itself, a different kind of emancipationist logic was at work here. To prove oneself a good Frenchman would it not help to prove oneself a good Jew? Was not the fight against discrimination, injustice and inequality also the fight for the rights of man as inscribed on the revolutionary banner of 1789?

Thus, both the leading Jewish journals of France – the *Univers Israélite*, edited by Simon Bloch, and the *Archives Israélites*, edited by Samuel Cahen²² – described the establishment of the Alliance as perfectly suited to the spirit of the age. As Bloch put it in his open letter to the six founding members of the Alliance (and his words were republished in the *Archives*):

Your enterprise, gentlemen, . . . is opening a new era in modern Judaism . . . [It] is a patriotic undertaking, because it will increase friendship for France . . . ; it is a religious undertaking . . . ; it is a social undertaking because it means still another step in the progress of human brotherhood, and will bring nearer that messianic epoch when all the peoples [of the world] will be imbued with the consciousness of the one God.²³

²¹ For a recent discussion of the view that Jewish emancipation involved implicitly an assimilationist contract (a “flawed bargain”): David Feldman, “Was Modernity Good for the Jews?”, in Bryan Cheyette and Laura Marcus (eds.), *Modernity, Culture and the “Jew”* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 171–187.

²² On Samuel Cahen, see e.g.: Jay R. Berkovitz, *The Shaping of Jewish Identity in Nineteenth-century France* (Detroit, 1989), p. 132.

²³ Bloch, “Alliance israélite universelle”, *L’Univers israélite: journal des principes conservateurs (par une société d’hommes des lettres)*, no. 9 (May, 1860), p. 653.

Again, in an earlier piece, Bloch saw the determination of the Alliance to create a world-wide, rather than a merely French, organization as a natural response to the astonishing advances being made in the fields of science and technology. After all, the new telegraphic system even made it possible to transmit “messages from one end of the world to another in a mere instant.” Was not this flood of new inventions just one more sign of the inexorable progress inherent in the new age? And, he emphasized, in this forward march “our co-religionists represent a very significant element.”²⁴

It should be noted here that in 1860 the liberal creed attained a high point of prestige in the Western world perhaps never to be reproduced until after 1945 or even 1990. It was in that year, *inter alia*, that Italy was united under Cavour’s leadership; that the Anglo-French free trade treaty was signed; that the Prussian Diet, still unchallenged by Bismarck, was pressing hard for radical constitutional change; that in the tsarist empire, plans were completed for the emancipation of the serfs; and that Abraham Lincoln was elected president of the United States. To move from the macro to the microcosmic level, mention can also be made of the fact that in the summer of 1860 Adolphe Crémieux launched an impassioned appeal to the Jewish people to raise large sums of money in aid of the Christian population of Damascus which had just been decimated in a vast massacre perpetrated by Druse bands. (“French Jews,” urged Crémieux, “let us be the first to help our Christian brothers!”)²⁵ In sum, what could have appeared more logical to the youthful sextet who founded the Alliance (Aristide Astruc, Isidore Cahen, Jules Carvallo, Narcisse Leven, Eugène Manuel and Charles Netter) than to launch their bold venture on to the rising tide of universalist values and to trust it to the prevailing winds: enlightenment, reason and toleration.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, no. 6 (February, 1860), p. 301. (Cf. Benisch, who described the activist and outspoken strategy of the Alliance as suited to “the age of steamboats, railways, electric telegraphs, free trade and freedom of the press . . . when kindred nation gravitates towards kindred nation . . . forming the civilized world into one community.” “Universal Israeli-tish Alliance”, *Jewish Chronicle* [10 August, 1860], p. 4).

²⁵ Isidore Cahen, “La souscription pour les victimes de la Syrie”, *Archives israélites* (August, 1860), p. 428. (Within a short time, French Jews had contributed over 50,000 francs to Crémieux’s fund; see S. Bloch, “La persecution des Chrétiens en Syrie,” *L’Univers israélite* [September, 1860], p. 19. Bloch there expressed the hope that this act of humanity would stand as “an eternal and splendid monument opposite that other monument in Damascus which still exists and which carries that infamous memorial – dictated by a non-Muslim fanaticism: ‘In memory of Father Thomas, assassinated by the Jews.’” At the other extreme, the claim was made in the *Gazette de Lyon* that the Crémieux fund had to be understood as an act of expiation: “to wash clean a bloody crime, the murder of Father Thomas” [qu. in *Archives Israélites*, September, 1860, p. 510].)

Nevertheless, it would be misleading to suggest that total unanimity reigned between the two French Jewish journals. Thus, in contrast to the strictly liberal *Archives*, the *Univers Israélite* followed a line that leaned towards moderate Orthodoxy. Simon Bloch saw in the Alliance an organization destined not only to defend the Jews from external hostility, but also and still more to defend Judaism from internal disintegration. He doubtless saw in the new organization a counterweight to the Consistoire Central which, in a running battle, he accused vociferously of being indifferent to Jewish observance and yet of seeking to dictate religious policy to the synagogues.²⁶ “The ideal of the *Alliance Israélite Universelle*,” he wrote, “is a most felicitous one, but this alliance in reality can only stand if it is grounded on religion (*‘veya’asu kulam agudah ahat*).”²⁷

Given that the creation of the Alliance for all its international aspirations constituted a French initiative, it is perhaps not surprising that it was greeted so warmly by the Jewish press in France (by *La Vérité Israélite* and the *Lien d’Israël* as well as by the *Archives* and the *Univers Israélite*).²⁸ What was far less predictable was how it would be received in Eastern Europe; indeed, whether an avowedly liberal organization, seeking to recruit members wherever Jews lived, could even receive mention in a press ever under the watchful eye of autocratic governments.

Not much could be expected of the Habsburg empire which at that time did not possess a single Jewish journal publishing news or systematic political comment. Nonetheless, Leopold Löw, the prominent reform-minded rabbi and Magyar nationalist, did slip a very favorable comment into his theological monthly, published in Hungary, the German-language *Ben-Chananja*. Not as yet having obtained government permission, wrote Löw, he could not publish the Statutes of the Alliance, but he did allow himself to provide short biographical notes on the six founding members of the organization and to remark that they were all

highly gifted young Frenchmen who in their enthusiastic commitment to Jewish teachings yield nothing to the famous rabbinic scholars of medieval France [*hakhmei zarfat*]. And those idiots and fanatics who have written off as lost the

²⁶ On Bloch’s attitude to the lay leadership of the consistories, see e.g.: Phyllis Cohen Albert, *The Modernization of French Jewry: Consistory and Community in the Nineteenth Century* (Hanover, New Hampshire, 1977), pp. 151–152, 261–262, 287–289, 297–298.

²⁷ S. Bloch, “Situation”, *L’Univers israélite* (September 1860), p. 4; (*‘veya’asu kulam agudah ahat*,” printed here in Hebrew characters, means: “and they will all constitute one brotherhood,” a phrase to be found in the Amida prayer on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur).

²⁸ As reported, e.g.: in “L’Alliance israélite universelle”, *Archives israélites* (August 1860), pp. 437–438.

children of the present age – an age which they simply do not understand – should now stand ashamed.²⁹

This comment drew an irritated rejoinder from the *Univers Israélite* where Simon Bloch insisted sharply that for Löw to refer to his Orthodox opponents as “idiots and fanatics” was a strange way to support the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* which had, after all, pledged itself to advance the unity of the Jewish people.³⁰

As a sign of the rapidly changing times, it turns out that papers published in the Russian empire, or just across the frontier – *Hameliz*, *Hamagid* and *Razsvet* – felt far freer than Leopold Löw to publicize the new organization. It is true that *Hameliz*, in marked contrast to *Razsvet*, considered it prudent to point out that it could not recommend to its readers that they join the Alliance so long as the government had not granted specific permission; and that *Hamagid*, although published in Lyck on the Prussian side of the border, likewise insisted that in its relations with the French organization it would have to take possible legal restrictions into account.³¹ But beyond that, all three papers gave the Alliance an ebullient reception even, if possible, going beyond that provided by the Jewish press in Paris.

Publishing long extracts from the Statement of Goals and from the Manifesto of the Alliance, they evidently saw no need to omit passages which only a few years earlier, under Nicholas I, would surely have been considered subversive. Thus, for example, *Hameliz* reproduced the references in the Statement (quoted above) to “the exclusionary laws . . . [and] acts of oppression from which the Jews suffer” in various countries and to the “efforts they make to free themselves . . . from their heavy yoke.”³² And from the Manifesto, it carried, inter alia, the appeal to those Jews who “believe that liberty of conscience . . . is nowhere better safeguarded for everybody than in those states where the Jews enjoy it totally untrammelled” (“Liberty of conscience” was rendered into Hebrew as “*hofesh hade’ot*”).³³

²⁹ “Nachbemerkung der Redaktion”, *Ben-Chananja: Monatsschrift für jüdische Theologie* (1 August, 1860), p. 395.

³⁰ S. Bloch, “L’Alliance israélite universelle”, *L’Univers israélite* (September 1860), p. 27.

³¹ Erez [Aleksandr Tsederbaum], “Haverim kol yisrael”, *Hameliz*, no. 6 (3/15 November, 1860), p. 93; “Frankraikh”, *Hamagid*, no. 32 (15 August, 1860), p. 127.

³² Erez, “Haverim kol yisrael”, *Hameliz*, no. 6, p. 91.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 92. (“*Hofesh hade’ot*” can be understood to mean “freedom of speech” or, perhaps, “freedom of information”).

The editors outdid each other in their words of support for the concept of the Alliance. "Prominent and discerning members of our nation [*a'meinu*] who are devoted to the Jewish people," declared *Hamagid*, "have taken this initiative . . . and are urging Jews in all four corners of the earth to act as a united body [*agudah ahat*]." ³⁴ For its part, *Razsvet* stated that if the enterprise were to succeed, "it will deserve to be called one of the most encouraging undertakings [initiated by the Jews] and one that does Israel the greatest honour." ³⁵ As for Aleksandr Tsederbaum, he launched into a paean of praise to the leaders of Western Jewry who, over the previous two decades, had launched quasi-diplomatic initiatives to support the Jews in Damascus, Turkey, Spain and Morocco, defending the good name of the Jews "always and everywhere." But, he concluded, this was still nothing compared to this new project in which they aimed "to protect their brethren wherever they are and to inspire them with a spirit of unity, faith and morality." ³⁶

For all the unanimity of support displayed by the three journals, the editors did not forgo the chance to express certain doubts at the practical level and to offer advice. While the goals were wholly admirable, did not the means to their attainment remain uncomfortably vague? Where was the funding to come from (membership costing, as it did, only six francs per annum)? Should not separate branches, asked *Razsvet*, be founded in every country, linked to Paris but enjoying a large measure of autonomy? ³⁷ Surely, insisted Tsederbaum, the Alliance should be negotiating with foreign governments in order to gain legal status in those states where it was required. And, he added, why had the Alliance circulated its materials only in European languages, but not in Hebrew which "is sacred to the Jews wherever they are to be found; they will be more impressed by ideas published in Hebrew than in any other language." ³⁸

Drawing on the Jewish papers published in the West, the East European journals kept their readers informed of the initial support coming from various quarters for the new organization. On the basis of such second-hand material, for example, *Razsvet* could report that the *Educatore Israélita*, published in Piedmont, had promised to establish a branch of

³⁴ "Frankraikh", *Hamagid*, no. 32 (15 August, 1860), p. 127.

³⁵ "Obozrenie inostrannoi evreiskoi zhurnalistiki", *Razsvet*, no. 18 (23, September, 1860), p. 289.

³⁶ Erez, "Haverim kol yisrael", *Hameliz*, no. 6, (3/15 November, 1860), pp. 89–90.

³⁷ "Obozrenie . . .", *Razsvet*, no. 18, p. 289.

³⁸ Erez, "Haverim kol yisrael", *Hameliz*, no. 6, p. 93.

the Alliance covering “all of Italy;”³⁹ and, similarly, *Hameliz* was able to reproduce Cavour’s letter in which he promised the Alliance that Italy, now unified, would not tolerate any further outrages of the kind involved in the Mortara affair.⁴⁰

Running parallel to this news about the Alliance, the Jewish press in the Russian empire published frequent reports on the contributions flowing into the fund-raising campaign launched by Crémieux on behalf of the Christians in Syria – a fund which won considerable support in both Odessa and St. Petersburg, as well as elsewhere in Jewish communities across the globe. “How times have changed,” declared *Razsvet* (and the voice is probably that of one of the two co-editors, Osip Rabinovich). “Our leaders and pastors preach love, not hate. Thank God for enabling us to live in such wonderful times.”⁴¹

The tone adopted by the English-language press in Great Britain and the United States in response to the establishment of the “*Universal Israeli-tish Alliance*” was both less exalted and more cautious than that to be heard emanating from Paris and Odessa. In contrast to the editors of the *Archives* or the *Univers Israélite*, those of such papers as the *Jewish Chronicle* in London and the *Jewish Spectator* in New York had not been involved in the preparatory and planning stages of the new organization. The personal prestige of the editors was thus not linked to its success or failure, nor were they intoxicated by that overwhelming sense of sudden liberation which was then sweeping over the intelligentsia in Russia. Moreover, they had to take into account the fact that the pre-existing institutionalization of Jewish politics in their respective countries could be seen as inimical to the project launched in Paris. They were eager to suggest refinements and modifications. But, nonetheless, all in all, the welcome given to the Alliance by the English-language journals was decidedly warm.

Across the Atlantic, it was the *Jewish Messenger* which spoke out in the strongest terms. All the materials issued by the Alliance (the Statement of Goals, the Manifesto and Statutes) had already, it reported in October,

been communicated, broadcast to every community throughout the United States . . . [and] we endorse the plan . . . We all serve one God, and are in reality but one people; why, then, should we be weak in the midst of strength, poor in

³⁹ “Obozrenie . . .”, *Razsvet*, no. 18, p. 289.

⁴⁰ “Hadashot”, *Hameliz*, no. 6, p. 95.

⁴¹ “Vnutrennye izvestiia”, *Razsvet*, no. 13 (19 August, 1860), p. 220.

the possession of wealth? . . . Is it not then the acme of folly for us . . . not [to] improve our position by every means within our power?⁴²

The *Messenger* was known for its unqualified support for the Board of Delegates of American Israelites, an umbrella organization set up in New York in 1859 as a response to the Mortara affair and in order to defend Jewish interests in the face of any such future crisis. The paper could have seen in the Alliance, with its world-wide claims, a threat to the Board of Delegates, but it chose not to do so. As an organization based on individual rather than corporate membership the Alliance, declared the *Messenger*, would complement, not compete with, the Board. Nobody should object to a body seeking “to form a bond that is to join together the Israelites of America, France, England and all other countries . . . for [their] general welfare.” However, in order to ensure maximal coordination, the “presiding officers” of such organizations as the Board of Delegates or the Board of Deputies in England should ex officio be appointed vice-presidents of the Alliance. And, as an added precaution, “no public actions whatever [should] be taken by the Alliance until communicated and agreed to by the six existing Consistories.”⁴³

In his journal, the *Occident and American Jewish Advocate*, Isaac Leeser, the well-known Philadelphia rabbi – a spokesman for moderate Orthodoxy and an outspoken champion of the Board of Delegates – expressed more basic reservations about what he termed a “utopian scheme.” “We do not see,” he wrote,

how a combination of our race all over the world, could obviate government aggression and popular prejudice, especially while our own discussion in religious sentiments gives to many an excellent excuse for displaying spite and ill-will against us.

But, he added, he would “not offer any opposition,”⁴⁴ and he republished in instalments the entire Statement of the Alliance,⁴⁵ albeit in the original French (a language understood, he wrote, by “the greater portion of those who would be likely to take part in the movement”).⁴⁶

⁴² “Universal Israelitish Alliance”, *The Jewish Messenger* (26 October, 1860), p. 124.

⁴³ Ibid. (7 September, 1860), p. 76.

⁴⁴ “Alliance Israélite Universelle”, *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate* (20 September, 1860), p. 156.

⁴⁵ The Statement (“Exposé”) appeared in the *Occident* on 20 and 27 September and on 4 and 11 October.

⁴⁶ “Alliance Israélite Universelle”, *ibid.* (20 September).

The primary opposition to the Board of Delegates was centered in the Reform movement,⁴⁷ and the Alliance was bound to become an additional focus for such negative attitudes. Given this fact, it is significant that the prominent Reform rabbi in Cincinnati, Isaac Meyer Wise, preferred to seek out the middle ground. In a laconic Rosh Hashanah comment, he wrote:

The movement in France to effect a union of all Israelites, for purposes not quite known to us, appears visionary to us; still it betokens the vitality and activity of our brethren and the cause we represent.⁴⁸

But, of course, in the English-speaking world, it was the *Jewish Chronicle*, by now some twenty years old and under the outspoken editorship of Abraham Benisch, which commanded the greatest attention. As it turned out, Benisch followed a line that was less than fully consistent. At the level of general principle, he provided the Alliance with unambiguous support. He not only published a translation of its Statement of Goals,⁴⁹ a twenty-page document in the French original, but he also provided it, in an editorial of 10 August, with a ringing endorsement. The program of the Alliance, he wrote, called

for the most cordial cooperation of every member of the Jewish community and [is] worthy of the most strenuous efforts of a great association, seated in the center of European intelligence and civilization. . . . No doubt there are some who believe that all combination on the part of Jews, if for defensive purposes, is not only useless, but mischievous; some who, disparaging the power of public opinion, believe that it is our best policy to endure our fate in silence, and not to rouse the fury of our irreconcilable enemies by a useless resistance. . . . But among the number of these believers we certainly cannot be reckoned.⁵⁰

At a second – the personal – level, though, Benisch did not hesitate to raise an issue rarely mentioned in the Jewish press. For the post of president of the new association, he proposed Albert Cohn (a scholar

⁴⁷ E.g.: “The Board of Delegates,” *The Jewish Messenger* (10 August, 1860), p. 44. (It was there stated that the Board of Delegates received its primary support from Orthodox Ashkenazi congregations; the Sephardi Jews stood aloof; and “the most violent opposition” came from the Reform camp).

⁴⁸ “Rosh Hashanah 5621” [printed in Hebrew characters], *The Israelite: A Weekly Periodical Devoted to the Religion, History and Literature of the Israelites* (14 September, 1860).

⁴⁹ “Programme of the Universal Israelitish Alliance,” *The Jewish Chronicle and Hebrew Observer* (10 and 17 August, 1860), p. 2.

⁵⁰ “Universal Israelitish Alliance,” *ibid.* (10 August, 1860), p. 4.

and emissary tirelessly active on behalf of Jewish communities abroad). Unacceptable would be the selection of Adolphe Crémieux who had disqualified himself for the post by permitting the baptism of his children or, as Benisch put it, by “the voluntary withdrawal from their ancestral religion of children by their own father.”⁵¹ (Support on this issue was supplied to Benisch by Leeser in his *Occident* who insisted that the Alliance could hardly be headed by somebody who had “cast off the Law of God as a useless burden.”)⁵² In response, the *Archives* chose simply to point out that everybody knew what Benisch was talking about, but the question was irrelevant “as Crémieux had never been designated as President by the society.”⁵³

At yet a third level, that of institutional politics, Benisch was more guarded and, as time showed, even inconsistent. On the one hand, he hoped that the Alliance would gain “a large number of adherents” and that a “branch association or at least an agency” be set up in London. But, on the other hand, he noted, the Board of Deputies of British Jews was no less committed than the Alliance to the defense of Jewish interests abroad. And, therefore, he concluded, so long as the Board of Deputies continued to involve itself with “our foreign brethren, whenever any calamity threatens them, no large amount of cooperation will be extended to the Alliance from our own shores.”⁵⁴

Benisch, however, did not stop there, choosing, rather, to address a warning to the Board and, by implication, to its President, Sir Moses Montefiore. If, he wrote, the Board were to yield to “heartless and selfish tendencies . . . , then there would be in the Anglo-Jewish community a burst of sympathy for the Alliance.”⁵⁵ And what was still a hypothetical question in August, had developed into a concrete issue by December, when the Alliance began pressing the Board of Deputies to join it in a concerted effort to relaunch the agitation on behalf of the Mortara family (with the aim, *inter alia*, of dispatching a combined delegation to lobby the Emperor Napoleon III).

Benisch’s initial reaction on 14 December to this project was tentative. He expressed regret that the Board had hitherto declined such

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² “Universal Israélitish Alliance”, *The Occident* (20 September, 1860), p. 156.

⁵³ Isidore Cahen, “Chronique du mois”, *Archives Israélites* (October, 1860), p. 581.

⁵⁴ “Universal Israelitish Alliance”, *Jewish Chronicle* (10 August, 1860), p. 4.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

cooperation, but added that he could understand the logic underlying the refusal:

The Board is a body that at least by tacit consent represents the overwhelming majority of the Anglo-Jewish community; it is recognized by the Government. It has glorious antecedents. . . . It can hardly consistently and with dignity cooperate with other bodies save those representing communities such as the Central Consistory of France.⁵⁶

Later in the month, though, the Alliance chose to press its claim much more vigorously, sending over to London a three-man delegation – Jules Carvallo, Narcisse Leven and Eugène Manuel – who were given the opportunity to address the Board. Carvallo there put the case succinctly: “The Alliance felt that without the support of the English brethren, it could achieve but little; but with it, everything.”⁵⁷

While not rejecting this initiative out of hand, the Board, firmly guided by Montefiore, chose to kill it off by constant deferral. Benisch responded with real anger. Writing on 18 January, 1861, he insisted that the Board owed the Alliance “early, earnest and favorable attention.” In the meantime, though, it was displaying “coldness, petty-mindedness and vacillation.” There was no longer any way that “the growth and activity of the Alliance [can] be retarded,” and if things continued along their present path, the new association would “gradually cast the Board of Deputies, through its own fault, into the shade.”⁵⁸ Time was running out for the Board.

Not unexpectedly, it was in the German-language Jewish press that the very concept of the Alliance was challenged on both ideological and strategic grounds. The opposition was by no means all-encompassing. As already noted, Leopold Löw reacted to the Parisian project favorably, while on the other side of the theological divide, the Orthodox press chose to avoid any clear commitment, waiting for the true nature of the new association to clarify itself.

Thus, the *Israelit* published in Mainz by Dr. Lehmann (and subtitled “A Central Organ of Orthodox Judaism”) made do with the briefest of comments, merely taking issue with the view, stated by the *Allgemeine*

⁵⁶ “The Mortara Case – the Agitation Renewed”, *ibid.* (14 December, 1860), p. 4.

⁵⁷ “Board of Deputies: Delegation from the Universal Israelitish Alliance”, *ibid.* (28 December, 1860), p. 5.

⁵⁸ “The Deputation of the Universal Israelitish Alliance to the Board of Deputies”, *ibid.* (18 January, 1861), p. 4.

Zeitung des Judenthums, that the establishment of the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* was symptomatic of some broader revitalization of Judaism. Such an interpretation, it stated, was simply “laughable;” there was absolutely “nothing religious” to be found in the stated goals of the organization.⁵⁹ For his part, the neo-Orthodox Frankfurt rabbi, Samson Raphael Hirsch, was somewhat more forthcoming in his journal, *Jeschurun*. “We welcome with satisfaction,” he wrote, “this idea of a general union for the civil and moral advancement of our brethren.” But he had two reservations. First, he wondered, was there not something presumptuous in the constant reference by the Alliance to “moral progress” as one of its key goals? After all, what the founding members of the Alliance had in mind here could hardly be their own self-improvement; they clearly saw themselves as too “enlightened,” too much part of the “Elect” for that. Thus, implicit in all this high-mindedness was the risk that the new organization would tend to “impose a moral and spiritual tutelage over those at whom they direct their philanthropic endeavours.”⁶⁰

And a still more basic question was whether the Alliance would be willing to focus its efforts strictly on the struggle for emancipation and against persecution. Did not the emphasis on the “moral progress” of the Jews suggest that the organization would soon be involving itself in the world of Jewish schools and other pedagogical endeavours – and hence forced to take sides on the issues of Jewish theology? It was hard to imagine how “people of integrity representing all the different shades of opinion can work together for such purposes.”⁶¹

To find outright opposition to the Alliance on theological grounds, it is necessary to turn, for example, to *Sinai*, a German-language monthly published in Baltimore, Maryland, by Rabbi David Einhorn, the well-known advocate of radical Reform in Judaism, and a disciple of Samuel Holdheim. Given its sprawling program and all-encompassing ambitions, argued Einhorn, the new association was by its very nature destined to failure. Beyond that, though, the last thing the Jews needed was leadership from France:

What have the French Jews, living in freedom, with their Consistory and Rabbinical School, done so far for Judaism? Little, or even nothing! Have those

⁵⁹ “Die Vorgänge in Amsterdam”, *Der Israelit: Ein Centralorgan für das orthodoxe Judenthum*, no. 13 (22 August, 1860), p. 161.

⁶⁰ “Frankreich: Paris (Juli, 1860), *Jeschurun: Ein Monatsblatt zur Förderung jüdischen Geistes und jüdischen Lebens in Haus, Gemeinde und Schule* (1 August, 1860), p. 625.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 626.

gentlemen, the chief rabbis, removed even one single *piyyut* from the prayer book? The medieval service still reigns supreme in all the synagogues of France.

The least that could have been expected from the Alliance, which talked so grandly of its commitment to the “moral elevation of the Jews,” was a serious consideration of the “Reform question.”⁶² But it had evaded the subject entirely.

With sharp irony, he wrote that “things must really be bad for Judaism if it needs a special union of all the Jews across the globe in order to defend itself against unbelief and indifferentism.” In harsh reality, such a conception was totally misguided. What Judaism required at this stage of history was only a return to the basic spiritual values embodied in the “covenant sealed at Mount Sinai.” This meant dedicated hard work and moral revival invested not in grandiose, world-wide, fantasies but in the here and now:

Effective religious schools; honest preachers who can speak to the people with true enthusiasm and excitement of God’s cause and the Jewish mission; a popular literature created not by bunglers but by writers with an inner calling and sense of the sacred; and, above all, the fundamental reordering of our religious life in accord with the ever more urgent demands of the Spirit [*Geistes*] – this and this alone can serve to maintain and exalt Judaism.⁶³

Einhorn’s vehement criticism, however, involved not only the religious but also the political sphere. He argued strongly that the establishment of the Alliance as a defense organization aiming to unite the Jews on a global scale would serve not to douse, but to stoke the flames of anti-Jewish hatred. In making this point, he was actually following in the wake of the editor of the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, Ludwig Philippson, who as the founding father of the Jewish press in its modern form – he had launched his paper in Leipzig as far back as 1837 – had acquired a position of exceptional prominence across the entire Jewish world. Frequently at the center of bitter controversy, and regarded with outright enmity by many in the Orthodox camp, Philippson was still somebody whose opinion could never be ignored.

A few platitudes apart, Philippson kept his own counsel regarding the Alliance for some two months,⁶⁴ but then, on 18 September, he came out

⁶² “Ein neuer Unionsplan”, *Sinai: Ein Organ für Erkenntniss und Veredlung des Judenthums* (October, 1860), p. 264.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 263.

⁶⁴ Philippson originally greeted the Alliance as “yet another sign of that vitality which in recent times has inspired Jews’ consciousness. New forms of creativity are replacing the religious structure which has formed the basis of Judaism for thousands of years, but which is now shrinking before our eyes.” (“Leitende Artikel: Alliance

with a carefully reasoned and somber statement, warning of the disastrous consequences that, in his opinion, would result from its establishment. He opened on a relatively optimistic note. "Hatred for the Jews," he wrote, "has declined to an extraordinary extent and in fact now lives on only in the hearts of Ultramontanes and Feudals."⁶⁵ However, he continued, there had been no such radical decline in that lower level of aversion – prejudice – which was extraordinarily tenacious even though many people, in deference to the liberal credo of the age, sought to conceal their feelings of dislike or suspicion. "Our primary concern," he maintained, "must be not to stifle the hatred, for that is beyond us; nor to fight the prejudice, because by so doing we would only reinforce it. Our aim, rather, must be to avoid providing prejudice with nourishment. If we can manage that it will, with time, perish of itself."

But, and here was the crux of the matter,

among the oldest and most ineradicable prejudices... is the one that ascribes to the Jews the maintenance of a secret pact, a collective will, an overarching comradeship which links all branches of our tribe [*Stammes*] in all places and at all times – and one which works against the Christian and other peoples among whom we live. This opinion is to be found alike among the common people and among the upper classes. . . . This prejudice is there; it is deep-rooted; and it is one of the most dangerous.

Fortunately, insisted Philipppson, ad hoc efforts to aid Jewish communities in danger did not add to such widely-held fears, because they were seen to be both "natural and transparent." (The efforts of Crémieux in Alexandria, of Montefiore in Damascus, of Albert Cohn in Morocco deserved every praise.) But the foundation of the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* was an enterprise of quite a different type.

The name alone makes Christians in their thousands shudder. "The Jews are banding together, are organizing themselves" – so the word spreads among the masses, calling up the worst phantoms. . . . A Universal Jewish Alliance, the existence of a permanent and organized union, will unleash the most multifarious speculations, a thousand suspicions.

In France, he concluded, the Alliance might receive support from parts of the public, but "we should not deceive ourselves. . . . In all the rest of

Israélite Universelle", *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums: Ein unparteiisches Organ für alle jüdische Interessen*, no. 32 [7 August, 1860], p. 467). A translation of the Manifesto and of the Statutes was published at the same time: *ibid.*, pp. 467, 468–469.

⁶⁵ "Ueber die Alliance israélite universelle", *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, no. 38 (18 September, 1860), p. 557.

Europe and even [for the most part] in France, the sentiment . . . and the result will be negative.”⁶⁶

His theme, as already mentioned, was taken up again (in the November issue of *Sinai*) by David Einhorn who, if anything, was even more vehement than Philippson. “What grist,” he there wrote,

must such a monstrosity [as the Alliance] provide for the fantasies of our enemies. Revolutionary intrigue; the conquest of Palestine with fire and sword; the strangulation of Christian trade; secret machinations against Christendom etc. – all this and God knows what else – will be ascribed to us seriatim. Nobody will believe that all that is involved is some harmless humbug.⁶⁷

It should be noted that Philippson in his September article did not confine himself to the problem of Judeophobia, although for him (here differing from Einhorn) it was, indeed, the crucial issue. His *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, like many of the other Jewish journals, was also critical of the inchoate organizational structure which had been sketched out in the Statutes of the Alliance – a structure which left ill-defined the relationship between the center in Paris and the branches in other countries as well as between the central committee and the membership at large. (“Above all, there is no control over the committee itself.”)⁶⁸

Ludwig Philippson was too influential a figure to be ignored and his article called forth a number of rejoinders in the Jewish press, although none of them credited his dire warnings regarding prejudice with the weight which, at least as seen in retrospect, they would seem to have deserved. For decades, Philippson had been forced to observe at close quarters the depths of Judeophobia in Germany and he was unwilling simply to brush the issue aside now that times had at last become better. But his was an unusual position. In 1860 it was easier to put one’s trust in the inexorable advance of Progress and to discount the relevance of the past.

Thus, Benisch in the *Jewish Chronicle* readily admitted that “the enemies of the Jews will undoubtedly find fault with [the Alliance] and level their venomous shafts at it.” But, he continued, this factor could not be

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 558.

⁶⁷ “Nachrichten: Padua”, *Sinai* (November, 1860), p. 322. (Einhorn was reacting here to a claim in the *Giornale di Verona* that the aim of the Alliance was “to subvert Christianity and reconstitute the Jewish Kingdom”, *ibid.*)

⁶⁸ “Ueber die Alliance Israélite universelle”, *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, no. 38 (18 September, 1860), p. 559.

allowed to serve as a deterrent, for “we believe that any such enmity will be more than matched by the Alliance.”⁶⁹

In a lengthy response to Philippson in the *Archives* Isidore Cahen recalled that he and the five other founding members of the Alliance had been all too aware of the fact that it would be depicted by hostile forces as a kind of Freemasonry, as “a secret league . . . aimed against other faiths.”⁷⁰ And, from the first, they had acted to neutralize this danger. In their Statement they had, after all, declared explicitly that the Alliance opened its membership

to men of all faiths and all opinions. Will anyone who sees them [non-Jews] in our midst . . . dare say that we are working for exclusivist ends? Who will fail to understand that what we are seeking is, above all, that . . . moral progress to which no human being . . . can feel indifferent?⁷¹

Moreover, and this was of crucial importance, the organization had made a point of eschewing all secrecy: “Publicity is the essential condition required for the long-term development and progress of the Alliance.” There was only one way to destroy “the universal prejudice against the Jews: . . . to work for civil emancipation, for complete enfranchisement.”⁷²

As for Philippson’s complaints regarding the organizational structure of the Alliance, the truth was, wrote Cahen, that the exact constitutional arrangements had deliberately been left open. There was no intention to dictate “a single, absolute direction;” nor to establish, as Philippson implied, “some sort of despotic centralization.” The Association was seeking “collaboration, not subordination.”⁷³ Time and experience were required to regularize the relationship between the association in France and its branches in other countries.

Isidore Cahen’s tone was respectful; Simon Bloch in his *Univers Israélite* chose, rather, to attack Philippson on an *ad hominem* basis and with much sarcasm. (Bloch’s anger was, in all probability, aggravated by the fact that much of the Orthodox rabbinate was then in open dispute with Philippson over the latter’s grandiose – and in their eyes, heterodox – project to

⁶⁹ “The Universal Israelitische Alliance – a Controversy”, *Jewish Chronicle* (16 November, 1860), p. 5.

⁷⁰ Isidore Cahen, “Mélanges: L’Alliance Israélite Universelle”, *Archives Israélites* (November 1860), p. 616.

⁷¹ *Alliance Israélite Universelle* (Paris, 1860), pp. 16–17.

⁷² Isidore Cahen, “Mélanges: L’Alliance Israélite Universelle”, *Archives Israélites* (November 1860), p. 617.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 618.

prepare a new, quasi-official, translation of the Hebrew Bible into German).⁷⁴ As far as Bloch was concerned, all that lay behind Philippson's opposition was wounded vanity:

Why had the [new] society neglected to appoint Mr. Philippson its president and chief? Why had it not selected Magdeburg to be the center of its activities? Is it permissible for European Jewry to undertake anything without the authorization . . . of the great colossus, Philippson?

The editor of the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* had also objected to the name, *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, on the grounds that it was a strictly French initiative. But, Bloch taunted, had Philippson forgotten that his own journal likewise described itself as "universal" (*allgemeine*) – even though, in reality, there was "precious little in it of the universal and still less perhaps of the Jewish."⁷⁵

Conclusion

With that useful reminder that, even in so relatively harmonious a year in Jewish life, not all was sweetness and light in the relations between the various editors, the attempt will now be made to set out some of the conclusions that can be drawn from this case-study.

Overriding everything else, of course, is the fact that in the period since 1837, the Jewish press had grown at a remarkable rate, with new journals springing up in an ever larger number of countries. Borrowing news from each other, and bandying opinions back and forth, they had by 1860 come to form a far-flung, but closely intertwined network; or (to return to an earlier metaphor) a forum which spanned geographical and linguistic boundaries. Their circulation was small, but their combined influence and prestige were great.

It is, therefore, in no way a surprise to find that when first setting out its goals and strategy, the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* assigned a key role to the Jewish (as well as to the general) press. In its view, the Jewish journals, situated as they were in so many countries, would serve as the source for the information required by the organization if it were to intervene rapidly

⁷⁴ See, e.g., Bloch's comment on the controversy caused by the Bible project: "Because Mr. Philippson is a Jew and so-called rabbi, [he thinks that] he can insult our religious leaders with impunity, subject their opinions to calumny, lie and defame . . . if this man were not simply a fool, he would deserve to be chased ignominiously from the community and from the sanctuary of Israel" (*L'Univers Israélite*, August, 1860), pp. 666–667.

⁷⁵ "Chronique", *ibid.* (November, 1860), p. 149.

at one crisis point or another. Indeed, in seeking to explain why and when the Alliance was established, the existence of the Jewish press has to be seen as a necessary although not sufficient condition.

But, of course, the flow of information was multi-directional and the foundation of the new venture was, in turn, widely publicized in the Jewish journals. Lengthy extracts from, and summaries of, the Statement of Goals, the Manifesto and the Statutes issued by the Alliance appeared in papers as diverse as *Razsvet* and *Hameliz* in Odessa; the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* in Leipzig; the *Jewish Chronicle* in London; the *Jewish Messenger* in New York and the *Occident* in Philadelphia. This was not the only channel by which the material was disseminated – there were also brochures – but it was in all probability the most effective.

All in all, the newly founded Alliance and its program received an exceptionally strong endorsement from the Jewish press, but there were numerous reservations and some vociferous opposition.

Interestingly enough, the dissent at no time involved the question of dual loyalty. Doubtless, there were Jews who feared that the cause of emancipation and acceptance in their respective countries could only be set back by the emergence of an organization which loudly declared its determination to unite the Jewish people across the world in defense of its political interests. But such anxieties did not find expression in the Jewish press. On the contrary, the dominant view expressed there was that the standing of the Jews in public opinion would only be enhanced by the emergence of an association which fought forcefully for Jewish interests under the banner of the rights of man. Underlying this optimistic perception was the fact that the liberal credo can be seen in retrospect to have attained a truly exceptional level of prestige in the Western world at this time.

The dissent and controversy associated with the appearance of the Alliance touched on other issues. First, there was clearly a considerable measure of uneasiness in various Jewish communities – primarily, but not only, in Britain and Germany – at the thought of yielding leadership to Paris. At another level, apprehension was expressed in a number of explicitly religious journals on both sides of the theological divide (mention can be made of *Israelit*, *Jeschurun* and *Sinai*) lest the activities and ideology of the Alliance divert public attention from what they saw as the single, overriding issue in Jewish life: the conflict between Orthodoxy and Reform.

Finally – and from today's vantage point perhaps most significantly – Ludwig Philippson in Saxony and David Einhorn in Baltimore both

argued in the most forceful terms that the creation of a Jewish organization seeking to build up Jewish power across the globe could well have just the opposite effect. Would it not conjure up fears of a conspiracy by the Jewish nation to attain dominion over the peoples among whom they lived? This thesis met with rejoinders, but they tended towards the superficial or even, in the case of *Univers Israélite*, to the supercilious. To most opinion-makers in the Jewish world, the future was perceived as too promising to permit any thorough-going analysis of so apprehensive a thesis.

PART TWO

REVOLUTION AND WAR (1905–1921)

Jewish Politics and the Russian Revolution of 1905

The Russian Revolution of 1905 belongs together with 1881 and 1917 as a period of crucial importance in the development of modern Jewish politics. Ideological ferment; a remarkable upsurge in political activity, organization and recruitment; the creation of new leadership elites; mass involvement – such was the Jewish response to each of these three periods of sudden crisis. Even though modernization was fast and deeply transforming Russian Jewry from the middle of the nineteenth century, these explosive reactions seem (in part at least) to have been fired by the messianic longings traditionally so central a feature of the popular consciousness of East European Jewry. To that extent, 1881, 1905 and 1917 belong not only together but also, for example, with 1665–66.

However, over and beyond its place in this recurring cycle, the crisis of 1905–7 brought the development of modern Jewish politics to a new stage.

If the Damascus Blood Libel of 1840 first impelled leaders of Western – post-Emancipation – Jewry to take up the Jewish cause abroad in areas of pre-Emancipation; if the year 1881 initiated the modern political organization of Russian Jewry – a process which eventually produced the proto-Zionist Hibat Zion movement in 1884; the first Jewish agricultural colonies in Palestine; the Yiddish-speaking labour movement in England and the United States; and the Bund in 1897; it was the 1905 revolution which first brought these (and additional) forces together into a dynamic,

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complex system of interaction, of competition and cooperation, of mutual repulsion and mutual attraction. The shape of Jewish politics as formed in the period 1905–7 would remain largely unaltered until the Second World War (even though the relative strength of its constituent elements, of course, was subject to constant flux).

But even though 1905 thus stands together with 1881 and 1917 (each period a crucial stage in the development of modern Jewish politics), the specific response of Jewry to the revolution followed its own pattern, one in many ways more familiar from the revolutions of 1848 in Central Europe. In both cases – and this surely was the key analogy – the Jews at home and abroad identified with the revolution overwhelmingly and enthusiastically. This was in contrast to 1789, when the French Revolution initially caught the Jewish communities divided and confused, and it was likewise in contrast to the crisis of 1881 and to the revolution of 1917, when fears for Jewish security in the face of anti-Semitic violence and pogroms found expression in the groundswell of support for an exodus – for *Amerikanstvo* and proto-Zionism (in 1881–82) and for Zionism (1917).

The most famous slogan to emerge from the rise of Jewish political consciousness in 1881 was “Auto-emancipation” – the creation of a Jewish state – but in 1905 as earlier in 1848 the Jews expected that the revolution would bring them emancipation, equal civil rights, in the here and now. Given this basic assumption, it is understandable that Jews (for most part still in their twenties or thirties) should have been so prominent among the revolutionary leaders. Fischhof, Gottschalk, Lassalle, Hess, Riesser, and Marx (a Jew converted to Christianity) then, were matched by Trotsky, Martov, Gershuni, Parvus, the Gotz brothers and Rosa Luxemburg now. Again, in 1848 as in 1905, the call went out for the reorganization of the internal Jewish community structure, for the replacement of theocracy and plutocracy by democracy and voluntary association.

And in both cases, there were mass outbursts of anti-Jewish violence, which, however, did not alienate the Jews from the revolution, but on the contrary, made their expectations of imminent deliverance the more urgent. Finally, in both periods, the eventual failure of the revolution to fulfil its promise led to an acceleration of the Jewish emigration to the United States which had already reached significant proportions before the revolution.

In sum, 1905 for Russian Jewry, as 1848 for German Jewry, represented the high point of the emancipationist faith. Even though Jewish liberals and socialists were sharply divided in the revolution, they nonetheless all

believed in it and were at least tacitly allied in its defence. Both revolutions, in the end, disappointed these expectations, led to a decline in political activism, and to a new caution and conservatism in broad strata of Jewish society.

The general enthusiasm of the Jews for the revolution of 1905 may seem strange to the present-day observer. After all, the pogroms in Russia during the period 1903–6 were far more widespread and vastly more murderous than the pogroms of 1881–82. Yet in the earlier crisis, the clear response had been to question whether the Jews had any viable future in Russia; to hold the revolutionaries in suspicion as perhaps even more dangerous than the government; to seek the mass transfer of Russian Jewry overseas to their own territory. But in 1905 even the Zionists and territorialists almost all saw the successful conclusion of the revolution as the first, immediate, and overriding priority.

There were a number of factors which produced so markedly different a reaction in 1905. First, there had been a clear and conscious change of policy within the Russian revolutionary movement. In 1881–82, the tendency in both the two major socialist parties – the *Narodnaia volia* and the *Cherny peredel* – had been sympathetic to the pogroms. There had even been a number of cases (which rapidly became notorious) of actual pogrom incitement. The revolutionaries for the most part had assumed that violence initially directed against the Jews would later turn against the landowners and then against the state. Axelrod's attempt to have the *Cherny peredel* officially condemn the pogroms was rejected for fear that such a statement might alienate the peasant and working masses (the *narod*).

But with the rapid decline of the revolutionary populist parties in the mid-1880s, this issue was rethought. Articles appearing in the final publications of the all but defunct *Narodnaia volia* stated openly that the support of the pogroms had been a mistake, both politically counter-productive and immoral, a negation of socialist principle. The swing away from populism to Marxism, which began in 1883, reinforced the tendency to take a more critical attitude to existing realities and mass attitudes. Thus, it was *Sotsial-demokrat*, the journal of Plekhanov and Axelrod, which (in marked contrast, for example, to the silence of Abe Cahan's *Arbeter tsaytung* in New York) denounced the decision of the Second International at its Brussels Congress in 1891 to condemn not only "anti-Semitism" but also and equally "philosemitism."

While the revolutionary camp was thus moving in one direction, the Tsarist regime was perceived to be moving in the other. In 1881, the

general assumption (later proved correct) had been that Alexander III was surprised and dismayed by the pogroms, that he saw in them evidence of anarchy and even of socialist conspiracy. The pogroms were blamed by the Jews not so much on the Tsar as variously on lower government officials, the mass of the Russian and Ukrainian peoples, or the revolutionaries. But as the Tsarist regime adopted a growing series of anti-Jewish measures in the 1880s and 1890s (including restrictions on land purchase and on rural residence; the *numerus clausus* in schools and universities; the expulsion from Moscow in the winter of 1891) so the Jews came increasingly to see in the regime an implacable enemy and in the anti-Tsarist forces potential allies. The general belief that the Minister of the Interior, von Plehve, was directly responsible for the Kishinev pogrom of April 1903 immensely reinforced this perception.

The barely veiled threats (often repeated in conversation by von Plehve and Witte) that the Jews could expect no respite unless they first restrained the revolutionaries of Jewish origin proved (if anything) to be counter-productive. The Jewish community *per se* had no control over the revolutionary youth which had emerged from its midst. But, as against this, the large numbers involved – over thirty per cent of the political arrestees in the years 1903–5 were Jews – meant that innumerable threads (familial and sentimental, informal but powerful) now linked Russian Jewry to the revolutionary camp. In the years 1905–7, when the so-called Black Hundred organizations – the Union of the Russian People, the Order of the Archangel Michael – received open support from the Tsar himself, the Jews felt that they had been forced inexorably on to the side of the revolution and against the counter-revolution.

Again, enormous efforts were invested by the Jewish youth – supported by important sections of Russian and world Jewry generally – in the creation of self-defence forces against the pogroms. As all such efforts had to be clandestine, they were hardly distinguishable from – and tended almost imperceptibly to merge with – the underground activities of the revolutionary movements. No other single factor, perhaps, did more to identify the Jewish cause with that of the revolution.

Moreover, this identification was reinforced still further by developments in the West. In 1881–82, the pogroms had coincided with the emergence of organized political anti-Semitism under the leadership of Stöcker in Germany and of Von Schoenerer in Austria-Hungary. This convergence had encouraged Lilienblum and other ideologists of proto-Zionism in their belief that Jewry had no future in Europe even (indeed, especially) after Emancipation. In 1905, however, the anti-Semitic parties

in Central Europe were in decline, as least as measured by parliamentary election results, and once again as in 1848 it was generally assumed that Emancipation did in fact mark a huge step forward for the Jews in their search for a secure place in the modern world.

For the first year of the revolution – from late in 1904 until the Tsar's Manifesto of Freedom on 17 October 1905 – the most spectacular and influential role in Jewish politics was played by the Bund. Created in 1897, the General Jewish Labour Union in Lithuania, Poland and Russia (the Bund, for short), was well placed to benefit from the fast unfolding events. Its clandestine organization, developed since the 1890s, was rightly famed for its conspiratorial expertise and its network of underground organizations spread across the Pale of Settlement. Its core membership, undeterred by the constant threat of arrest and Siberian exile, had been hardened in the long struggle against the Tsarist police. Its anti-pogrom defence corps – the *Boevoi otriad* – was large and had played a major role (together with a smaller Poale Zion force) in fighting off the pogrom in Homel in September 1903. With its printing presses in Russia and abroad, and with its transportation systems across the frontiers and within the Russian Empire itself, it was able to respond adequately from the first moment to the revolutionary events in the Pale of Settlement.

Until 1905, after all, the Bund was the only Jewish revolutionary party. (The SSRP, the SERP and the ESDRP-PZ¹ were not officially established until the revolution had actually begun.) And so it was the Bund alone which in December 1904 could dramatically and effectively call on the Jews to join the struggle for the final overthrow of Tsarism. Issued in close to one hundred thousand copies, its manifesto of that month, declared “the order of the day [to be] the liquidation of the Autocracy. . . . Mighty blows . . . will drive the decrepit monster into the abyss. . . . The slave will become the citizen.”² The Bund – in the wake of Bloody Sunday (9 January 1905) – played a major role in the strikes staged by workers in dozens of cities across the Pale of Settlement. In the famous June Days of 1905, when pitched battles were fought around the barricades hastily raised in Odessa and Lodz, the Bund again was in the centre of events. The

¹ SSRP (Sionistsko-sotsialisticheskaia rabochaia partiia) – The Zionist Socialist Labour Party usually known as the SS; SERP (Evreiskaia sotsialisticheskaia rabochaia partiia) – The Jewish Socialist Labour Party; ESDRP-PZ (Evreskaia sotsial-demokraticheskaia rabochaia partiia – poale tsion) – The Jewish Social Democratic Labour Party – Poale Zion.

² “Proklamatsiia tsentralnogo komiteta Bunda,” *Poslednie izvestiia* no. 209 (12, January 1905) p. 1.

comment of *Voskhod*, the major organ of the Jewish liberal establishment, on the uprisings in those cities expressed total identification: “The horrors of Odessa and Lodz are utterly remarkable in their scale; the most sombre pages of modern human history pale before them. The violent official measures not only proved totally impotent but uprooted all the faith of the [entire] population in the local government: i.e., destroyed morally all governmental power.”³

Given its pre-eminent position as a revolutionary party in the Jewish world, the Bund in 1905 naturally served as a model for other – rival – movements. This was obviously true of the new revolutionary Zionist and territorialist parties which, despite fundamental ideological differences, now sought to create themselves largely in the Bundist image. But it was also true of the so-called “bourgeois” movements. The national programme which the Bund had been developing since 1901 was adopted, in different degrees, by all the non-socialist forces competing for political influence in “the Jewish street.” The Bund advocated Jewish national (personal) autonomy in Russia and this same concept (with various nuances) was adopted during the years 1905–6 by Vinaver’s liberal *Evreiskaia narodnaia gruppа*, Dubnov’s *Folkspartey* and the Russian Zionist Organization. The Bund regarded Yiddish as the Jewish national language and Yiddishism now came into its own as never before. Even the Zionists found themselves publishing more and more in Yiddish (the language of the masses), less and less in Hebrew. *Ha-shiloah* ceased publication in 1905–6.

In general, 1905 was a black year for Russian Zionism. Herzl’s death in the previous year still cast its dark shadow over the movement. It was hopelessly divided by the East Africa project. The leadership (headed by Ussishkin) rejected Uganda. The Zionist youth and left, on the other hand, moved overwhelmingly into the territorialist camp. With the rise of the revolutionary ferment there was a new urgency in the air and the search for all-embracing immediate solutions proved all but irresistible. The SSRP (Syrkin’s party) and the SERP (Zhitlovsky’s party) were both committed to the territorialist idea. Syrkin, speaking in the name of its ten thousand members, led his party out of the movement at the Seventh Zionist Congress in August 1905. While territorialism thus ate away much of its strength, the Russian Zionist movement was weakened still further by the mounting revolutionary fervour. For twenty-five years (since the

³ “Chrezvychainye mery,” *Voskhod* no. 26 (29, June 1905) p. 3.

emergence of Hibat Zion), it had sought to disassociate Zionism from revolution largely in order to preserve its legal or semi-legal status. Now it was caught off balance and could only adjust slowly to the fast-changing realities.

The primacy of the Bund in 1905 was exemplified in yet another and crucial field. Until the month of October in that year, it set the pace in the collection of funds in the United States. It had established American support branches late in 1903 (the Central Federation of Bundist Organizations in America and the Friends of the Bund) and they now launched intensive fund-raising campaigns which made the most of the immigrant enthusiasm for the revolution. Here, as in so many other spheres, the Bund enjoyed a head-start.

The high point of the 1905 revolution came with the promulgation of the Tsarist Manifesto on 17 October which promised the election of a parliament and a guarantee of the fundamental civil rights. It was enthusiastically received by excited crowds who thronged into the streets in cities across the Empire – nowhere more so than in the major towns of the Pale of Settlement. But over the next two weeks a terrible wave of pogroms swept over the Jewish communities of Russia, primarily but not only in the Ukraine. Cautious estimates put the number of pogroms at six hundred and ninety. The number of Jews killed in Odessa alone was given as eight hundred and in all many thousands died in those two weeks. There had been nothing like it since the Khmelnitsky uprising.

This instant transition from triumph to tragedy had a shattering impact on Russian Jewry. Jewish emigration from Russia to the United States jumped to the unprecedented number of over 125,000 in 1906. The confidence of the Jewish masses in themselves as a revolutionary force was, according to all accounts, severely shaken. There were no repetitions in the Pale of the June Days. Yet, despite all this, the general commitment of the Jewish public to the revolution (as expressed by the press, the parties, the political leadership) remained essentially unchanged.

True, there was much bitterness and anger directed not only at the *pogromshchiki*, the Black Hundreds and the Tsarist regime, but also at the Russian and Ukrainian peoples and even at the general socialist parties (the Russian Social Democrats and the Socialist Revolutionaries). The sentiment was widespread that they could have done more to combat the pogroms. This belief in turn undermined confidence in the Jewish socialist movements which all saw themselves as integrally linked to the Russian revolutionary army. All these feelings found their most impassioned expression in a series of articles – “Lessons from the Terrible

Days” – which were published by Dubnov in *Voskhod* from December 1905.

Those thousands and tens of thousands of workers, peasants, *meshchane*, and *raznochintsy* who across the length and breadth of Russia, from Odessa to Tomsk, broke Jewish heads, tore out children’s eyes, raped women and cut them to pieces... were doing what their fathers and brothers did in years past and will do again given favorable circumstances... And the leading paper of the organized Russian proletariat – *Novaia zhizn* – has passed by the pogroms almost in silence as if they were some minor episode in the revolutionary struggle. The Jewish proletariat together with (and often more than) the Russian proletariat paid the price in the revolutionary struggle... But what did the Russian comrades do [during the pogroms]?... Those dozens of... students and other Russians who took part in Jewish self-defence and fell victim... remain wonderful exceptions to the miserable rule... You [the left] will answer us with reference to “counter-revolution”, to “mass psychosis” and to “the line of least resistance.”... But what will you do with the people, those Jewish masses who – in the space of one week – have just lived through all the horrors of the Middle Ages taken together... making 1905 analogous to 1648 (read 1648, not 1848).⁴

These words sound like an echo from 1881 and are reminiscent of Lilienblum’s response then to the pogroms. Nevertheless, Dubnov in fact was by no means repudiating the revolution per se. On the contrary, he declared that there could be no turning back. “From the terrible experiences of the last quarter of a century,” he wrote, “Russian Jewry has developed an irreconcilable hatred for the despotic regime... From the tortured heart of the people has been wrung a terrible oath not to end the struggle against all that remains of this regime.”⁵ This line of thought was representative of liberal, socialist and Zionist thinking alike.

The specific political target of Dubnov’s criticism was not the revolution but the revolutionary left – above all, the Bund. He was enraged by two aspects of their policy in 1905. First, he rejected their insistence on applying the class-war doctrine to the Jewish situation in Russia. A nation in so dangerous and vulnerable a plight had no choice, he insisted, but to close ranks. Second, he argued that the Jewish socialists had adopted a mystical attitude to the goals of the revolution – “They are profoundly convinced,” he noted bitterly, “that the Russian people is called upon to carry through a revolution of the highest order enabling it at one fell swoop to leap all historical barriers; to leap over a democratic constitution

⁴ S. Dubnov, “Uroki strashnykh dnei,” *Voskhod* no. 47–8 (1, December 1905) pp. 3–4.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 4–5.

directly to ‘popular government’ or to a democratic republic or even a little further to a social republic.”⁶

In taking this stand, Dubnov was speaking for a growing body of nonsocialist opinion. The balance of forces after October emerged as significantly different from that which had characterised the first year of the revolution. The Bund now found itself hard put to it to maintain its hegemony in “the Jewish street.” Within the camp of Jewish socialism it came under growing competitive pressure from its more nationalist rivals – the SSRP, the SERP and ESDRP-PZ. And on the right it found itself faced by “bourgeois” forces, both liberal and Zionist, which had become more articulate and more assertive. This shift was no doubt caused primarily by the shock effect of the pogroms. But the far greater leeway legally permitted political activity after the October Manifesto also served to reduce Bundist ascendancy. The Zionists and liberal organizations which were historically ill prepared to act underground were now able to conduct their conferences and other mass meetings quite openly – a privilege which the police denied the revolutionary socialist parties.

Jewish politics as they crystallized out in the post-October period (in the shape which they would keep for the coming decades) can best be visualized as a quadrangle with the Bund at one of the four points; the general Zionist movement at the second; the non-Zionist liberals at the third; and the socialist Zionists and territorialists at the fourth.⁷ Of course, none of these camps was totally homogeneous. In the liberal bloc, Dubnov’s *Folkspartey* was more nationalist than Vinaver’s *Evreiskaia narodnaia grupp*a. Again, there were of course three different and rival parties in the camp of socialist emigrationism. Nonetheless, the dividing lines between the four blocs were far deeper than those within them.

This fact by no means precluded alliances between two or more of the camps – who allying with whom being dependent, of course, on time and place. In Russia, in 1906, the overriding factor proved to be the class, as opposed to the national, issue.

Thus, on the one side, all the major “bourgeois” forces – Zionist, non-Zionist and even anti-Zionist – united in the Union for Equal Rights (or in full, The Union for the Attainment of Full Rights for the Jews in Russia). This organization had been formed in March 1905 but had made little impact until October. Thereafter, however, it became an effective

⁶ Ibid., p. 9.

⁷ For an extensive examination of Jewish politics in the period of the 1905 revolution see J. Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism, & the Russian Jews, 1862–1917* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 133–364.

platform for the most prominent figures in Jewish public life. Among those who participated actively in its deliberations were Vinaver, Dubnov, Ahad Ha-Am, Ussishkin, Shmarya Levin and Jabotinsky.

While all the constituent groups in the Union supported both the revolution and Jewish national rights (autonomism in one or other of its variants) they differed in their order of priorities. Vinaver and his circle placed the emphasis on the general political struggle. For their part, Dubnov and most of the Zionists identified with the Russian liberal – the Kadet – party but they argued that the Jews had to achieve maximal internal unity in order to gain official recognition of their national rights. They now took up the call for the immediate and democratic election of a Jewish National Assembly. Such a Jewish parliamentary body as they envisaged it would precede the confidently awaited Russian Constituent Assembly and so be in a position to present it from the first with the national demands of Russian Jewry. “Our main task,” declared Jabotinsky at the Congress of the Union in November 1905, “is to meet together, to clash with one another, to receive directives from the entire Jewish people.”⁸

This call for Jewish unity in time of crisis was rejected derisively by the Jewish left – not only by the Bund but also by the parties of socialist Zionism and territorialism. As opposed to cooperation along a vertical or national line – *klal yisroel politik* – they advocated cooperation along the horizontal line: class war and proletarian internationalism. Jabotinsky and other supporters of a Jewish National Assembly pointed out that all the socialist parties (the Bund, the SSRP, the SERP, the ESDRP-PZ) were committed to the concept of Jewish national autonomy in Russia and that this implied a democratically elected Jewish parliament or Seim. But the socialists replied that nothing could be allowed to divert attention from the overriding issue – the victory of the revolution – and that a Jewish National Assembly would constitute just such a diversion. The proletariat might well be in a minority there and would be forced to reject its authority, thus exposing the inherent futility of the entire exercise. In turn, the leaders of the Union for Equal Rights retorted that what the socialists were really after was no longer Jewish autonomism but a proletarian dictatorship.

The gulf which opened up between the “bourgeois” and “proletarian” camps was unbridgeable at this juncture. And this was true despite the fact that all the Jewish socialist parties were not only committed to Jewish

⁸ “Sezd Soiuza polnopraviia,” *Khronika evreiskoi zhizni* no. 48–49 (23, December 1905) p. 36.

national rights but in many ways strongly nationalist in spirit. What kept the two sides apart were powerful psychological and political factors.

While the liberal forces grouped around the Union for Equal Rights could act openly, the socialists had to conduct much of their party activity in the underground. Enormous efforts went into gun-running, weapons training and all else that was involved in the self-defence campaign. Their party conferences were illegal and held secretly or abroad. Their membership – and still more their leadership – was extremely young (usually in their early twenties). In short, the deep alienation of the front-line soldier from the comfortable citizenry in the rear coincided here with a major generation gap.

But there were profound ideological and political divisions too. While the leaders of the Union for Equal Rights generally identified with the Kadets and hoped that the revolution would limit itself to constitutional change, the socialists assumed that it would involve some form of proletarian hegemony. In their day-to-day activities, they were committed to the class war, meaning not only political but also economic strikes – the attainment of drastic wage increases, and sharply reduced working hours. In many cases, when they ran short of money, they had recourse to compulsory contributions from the rich and even (as in the case of the Poale Zion in Poland) went in for extensive “expropriations” (the armed robbery of public institutions). With the decline of public order and traditional authority, their writ ran far in the daily life of the Jewish public. The young revolutionaries were often called in to replace the rabbis in settling labour disputes, business conflicts and even matrimonial problems.

Given these realities – the constant danger in which they lived, the authority which they wielded, the increasingly anarchic and conflict-ridden society in which they had to act – it is hardly surprising that the socialist parties became ever more radicalised. Marxist determinism in its most extreme forms now became the ideological norm, serving (like the Calvinist doctrine of predestination) to inspire confidence, to elicit self-sacrifice and to orient the faithful in their struggle with a hostile world. The young party leaders were expected to prove not only organizational skills; but also the ability to analyse reality in terms of the Marxist science, to present complex *referaty* on theoretical issues; and (ideally) to impress mass audiences with their oratorical gifts. They combined nationalist themes – the duty to defend the Jews against attack, to uphold the national honour, to seek national solutions to the Jewish question – with a far-reaching proletarian internationalism. Their thinking thus reflected

the complex reality of their situation in which the revolution was accompanied by the pogroms, and the fight against Tsarism (shoulder to shoulder with Russian and Ukrainian workers) was interspersed with that against the *pogromshchiki* (among whom were other – or perhaps the same – Russian and Ukrainian workers).

Proletarian hegemony was under these conditions not just a theory but also an everyday (although highly volatile and unstable) fact. The calls for a Jewish assembly, *klal yisroel politik*, threatened their hegemony and offered the Jewish socialists no obvious benefits. Proletarian internationalism, in contrast, held out the promise of revolutionary victory and of an honourable role for Jewish socialism in that victory. All four Jewish socialist parties sought official recognition from the Second International and the Bund in the summer of 1906 decided to return (despite the ungenerous terms offered) to the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, which it had left in 1903. Again, the Jewish socialist parties all chose to boycott the elections to the First Duma – a boycott which boomeranged, playing into the hands of the non-socialist Jewish groups. (Twelve Jewish deputies, including five Zionists, but not one socialist, were among the deputies elected in the spring of 1906.)

But, of course, the First Duma was short-lived and by mid-1906 the revolution was clearly in ebb. And if the initial enthusiasm of the Jews for the revolution had (according to all accounts) surpassed that of the population at large, so the decline in political activism and organization after 1907 was also exceptionally marked. There were many factors involved here: the overwhelmingly urban and semi-urban situation of the Jewish population in Russia; its high measure of economic marginality; its messianic traditions – all of which combined to make its antennae more sensitive and its emotions more subject to political change.

The multiple connections with the United States (and to a much lesser extent with other Western countries) also served to accelerate and magnify these rapid changes. Indeed, the American dimension was of crucial importance in the Jewish politics of the 1905 revolution. Revolutionary organization depended to an extraordinary extent on the ebb and flow of fund-raising and this dependence grew as the Russian economy was undermined by the turbulence of war and internal disorder.

As in Russia so in America, the Bund was thrown on to the defensive in the wake of the October pogroms. It refused to merge its fund raising efforts with those of the Jewish Defence Association – an umbrella organization founded in November 1905 to finance the purchase of arms for the Jews in Russia. A publicity war ensued between the two

organizations which now had to compete for the large sums of money – many tens of thousands of dollars – contributed for this purpose by American Jewry. The Jewish Defence Association was led by Judah L. Magnes (who was linked both to the Federation of American Zionists and also to the German-Jewish establishment of Schiff and Marshall), on the one hand, and by such (non-Bundist) socialists as Chaim Zhitlovsky and J. Kopeloff, on the other. Its funds went primarily to support the self-defence organizations of the Poale Zion and socialist territorialists in Russia. But with the decline of the revolution, the inflow of funds dropped catastrophically leaving revolutionary organizations in Russia high and dry.

In the United States, it was thus not the class line which proved decisive. The non-Bundist socialists (the Poale Zion and territorialists) were ready to adopt policies of national unity, *klal yisroel politik*, in open opposition to the Bund. The Bundists did give primacy to the idea of class war and in so doing, could usually rely on the support of the *Forverts* and the established Yiddish-speaking labour movement – even though that support was less than whole-hearted and proved unreliable in the long run. It was in the labour movement (particularly in the major trade unions such as the ILGWU and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers) that the post-1905 ex-Bundist immigrants made their greatest mark. For its part, the camp of Jewish liberalism set up the American Jewish Committee in 1906 in direct response to the pogroms and the crisis in Russia. Over the next decade it proved itself ready to enter into ad hoc alliances with both the Zionist leadership (on certain issues) and with the *Forverts*-Bundist bloc (on others).

In Galicia, too, a major influence on Jewish life was exerted by the revolution in Russia. Thus, in May 1905 a break-away group from the PPSD set up the ZPS (The Jewish Social Democratic Party),⁹ which was consciously modelled on, and unofficially allied to, the Bund. A split in the Poale Zion movement resulted, as in Russia, in the emergence of territorialist and Palestine-oriented parties. And in both, there was mounting pressure to adopt an out-and-out class-war ideology. The growing influx of comrades from Russia in the years 1906–8 lent further strength to the left-wing. For their part, the Zionists – influenced by but also influencing Russian Zionism – entered fully into the local political life and created the

⁹ PPSD (Polska Partja Socjalno-demokratyczna Galicji i Skaszka Cieszynskiego) – The Polish Social Democratic Party of Galicia and Teshchen Silesia; ZPS (Zydowska Partja Socjaldemokratyczna) – The Jewish Social Democratic Party.

Jüdische Volkspartei to that end. In the elections of 1907 to the Austrian Reichsrat, four Zionist candidates won seats. However, there were limits to Russian influence. The division along class lines between “proletarian” and “bourgeois” remained far less total than across the frontier in the Pale of Settlement. And Poale Zion, for example, refused adamantly to join the Russian party when (in 1909) it decided to cease its participation in the Zionist Congress.

Still more important, of course, was the impact of the revolution on the Yishuv in Palestine. The major wave of immigrants in the Second Aliya arrived from Russia in the period directly following the pogroms. Nahum Tversky would even write in later years that the “Second Aliya in the real sense only lasted a few months – in [the winter] of 1905–6. It was a kind of volcanic eruption following the first Russian revolution and the reaction against it – the terrible pogroms of late 1905. A stream of molten lava in the shape of a few hundred youngsters poured forth in a moment on to the fields of Palestine.”¹⁰

Given the fact that the new Yishuv was by definition the product of proto-Zionist and Zionist enterprise there could be no repetition of the quadrangle characteristic of post-1905 Jewish politics in Russia, Galicia, America and other major centres of East European Jewry.

Nonetheless, the Second Aliya itself was very much a product of 1905 and, indeed, perpetuated in Palestine many aspects of the revolutionary period, some of which hardly survived in Russia itself after 1907. It was not just (to take some instances) that the first paper of the Poale Zion in Palestine was published in Yiddish rather than Hebrew; that its programme was strongly Marxist; its revolutionary strategy based directly on the strategies of the Russian Social Democrats in 1905–6 and its name, The Jewish Social Democratic Labour Party in Palestine (Poale Zion) the same (with the necessary geographical adjustments) as that of the mother party in Russia. Of much greater, longer-term significance, for example, was the priority assigned by many in the Second Aliya – particularly by the Poale Zion – to the construction of quasi-military societies (Bar-Giora and Ha-Shomer) in which they invested both the experience and (perhaps no less significant) the pathos acquired in the Jewish self-defence forces – the *boevye otriadi* – in the Pale of Settlement.

But over and beyond all such specific cases, there was the very phenomenon itself which came in later years to be known as the Second Aliya – a generation of young immigrants who despite (or perhaps because

¹⁰ N. Tversky, “Imo,” *Ha-poel ha-tsair* no. 27–8 (6, April 1937) p. 9.

of) their few numbers saw themselves as set apart. Regardless of whether they belonged to Poale Zion or the rival Ha-Poel Ha-Tsair they believed that the future belonged to party-political organization, to over-arching ideology, to a nationalism grounded on labour, and that only they – the youth tempered in the revolution – understood these simple truths. They came expecting to democratise, purge and transform the existing Yishuv; when they failed to do so they (the few remaining and the few more who joined them) drew apart seeking to create their own society – insulated from the existing Yishuv, and supplied with the necessary capital from abroad (the World Zionist Organization or the World Union of Poale Zion).

In conclusion, it should be acknowledged that 1905 was perhaps less crucially important in modern Jewish history than 1881. It did not represent a major turning point, a basic re-evaluation of values, the creation of fundamentally new political movements. What it did do was to make broader circles than ever before conscious of the urgency of the Jewish problem; to stimulate the creation of additional parties and organizations dedicated to its solution; and to bring them together into a complicated shifting system of alliances and rivalries. This system took different forms in different countries but also had an international dimension lent particular significance by the growing importance of fund-raising in the West for political activity in the East (be it in Russia or in Palestine).

Above all, however, 1905 saw the emergence of a new generation in Jewish politics – very young, numerous, possessed of precocious political and organizational experience, confident in itself and its methods, trained by the Marxist method to think in terms of world-historical categories and change, ready to lead whenever the opportunity came – as it did, for example, with industrial unionism in the United States; with the Russian revolution of 1917; and with the arrival of the Third Aliya in Palestine after the First World War.

“Youth in Revolt”

An-sky's In Shtrom and the Instant Fictionalization of 1905

In January 1907, the St. Petersburg Yiddish daily *Der fraynd* began to bring out installments of S. An-sky's new novella, *In shtrom: Ertzelung fun der yidisher revolutsionerer bavegung* (With the Flow: A Tale of the Jewish Revolutionary Movement in Russia). An-sky also had it published at the time in Russian, the language in which he had originally written the work. The two texts vary to a significant extent, but it appears that the Yiddish translation had at least the author's approval and probably his active participation. (In what follows, I shall refer to both versions.)¹

An-sky's novella was only one among a number of fictional works published in the wake of the 1905 revolution “on the Jewish street.” In fact, Mordkhe Spektor's short novel, *Avrom Zilbertsvayg*, appeared

¹ “In shtrom: Ertzelung fun der yidisher revolutsionerer bavegung,” *Der fraynd*, no. 2 (Jan. 3/16, 1907–), republished as *In shtrom: Ertzelung* in Sh. An-ski, *Gezamelte shriftn*, vol. 9 (Warsaw, 1928) (henceforward: *Gsh* 9). For the Russian, see S. An-skii, “V novom rusle (povest),” *Novye veianii: Pervyi evreiskii sbornik* (Moscow, 1907), 88–286 (henceforward: *NV*); also in his *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 4 (St. Petersburg, n.d.), 33–212 (henceforward: *S. soch.* 4). There are frequent stylistic changes in the latter edition, as well as a radically variant numbering of chapters, but very little alteration in the actual content. However, a few concessions were made to the new political realities – for example, the slogan “Down with the Autocracy!” was replaced by “Long Live Freedom!” (*NV*, 274; *S. soch.* 4, 199). The dedication of the work to the PSR leader Mikhail Rafailovich Gots, who had recently died in 1906, was also omitted in the later version. As indicated at the end of the novella (*NV*, 286), the work was completed in Vitebsk in October 1906. The Yiddish text is significantly shorter than the Russian. Both texts are cited here, and where there are variants the fuller version is usually the one preferred. (Unless otherwise indicated, all translations in English are mine. I have given preference, for the sake of consistency, to the present tense regardless of that used in the original.)

Previously published in Gabriella Safran and Steven J. Zipperstein (eds.), *The Worlds of S. An-Sky: A Russian Jewish Intellectual at the Turn of the Century* (Stanford, 2006), pp. 137–63 (and notes, pp. 456–9).

(likewise in installments) in *Der fraynd* over much the same period as An-sky's *In shtrom*.² And Yitskhok Mayer Weissenberg's *A shtetl* had first come out as a special supplement to the Warsaw daily *Der veg*, also at the start of 1907.³ *Der mabl* (The Flood), Sholem Aleichem's sprawling and panoramic novel, was commissioned by Louis Miller and published in serialized form in his New York newspaper, *Di varhayt*, starting in late March 1907; shortly thereafter it was brought out again by Spektor's Warsaw paper, *Undzer lebn*.⁴ (Astonishingly, under financial pressure, Sholem Aleichem – newly arrived in the United States – had produced his novel in a mere two months.)⁵ Of the five works to be discussed in this chapter, only Aharon Avraham Kabak's Hebrew novel, *Daniel Shafranov*, came out after the revolutionary upsurge in Russia (1904–7) had finally subsided. Kabak's book was published in Warsaw in 1912, but evidence suggests that it had been in the making over a long period and that it, too, was written under the powerful and all but immediate impact of the insurrectionary experience. (Kabak had been in Grodno during the revolution.)⁶

This instant fictionalization of politics was, as a broad cultural phenomenon, surely without precedent in the Jewish context. What made it

² Mordkhe Spektor, "Avrom Zilbertsvayg: Ertzelung," *Der fraynd*, no. 6 (Jan. 8/21, 1907–); republished in *Ale verk fun M. Spektor*, vol. 2: *Heymische bilder* (Warsaw, 1913), 3–57.

³ Y. M. Weissenberg (Vaysenberg), *A shtetl* (supplement to *Der veg*, apparently attached to the issue of Jan. 14/27, 1907); republished in book form (Warsaw, 1910). References will be to the 1910 edition (henceforth: *A shtetl*).

⁴ Sholem Aleichem, "Der mabl," *Di varhayt*, no. 437 (Mar. 30, 1907–); also in *Undzer lebn*, no. 40 (Apr. 8/21, 1907–); the two versions differ to a significant extent. The publishing history of this novel is complex. Thus, the book version, published in Warsaw before World War I (apparently in a number of printings) was based on the text found in *Undzer lebn* – as were later editions of *Der mabl*. The extremely truncated version, entitled *In shturem* (In the Storm), appeared in editions of Sholem Aleichem's collected works (e.g., vol. 7 of *Ale verk fun Sholem Aleichem* [New York, 1918]). Arye Aharoni suggests that the abbreviation of the text was, in fact, undertaken by Sholem Aleichem's son-in-law, Y. D. Berkowitz, on his own initiative. See Aharoni's afterword to *Hamabul* (Tel Aviv, 1991), 325–34. The English translation is from *In shturem: In the Storm* (New York, 1948); the Hebrew is from *Der mabl* (Warsaw, 1924).

⁵ Y. D. Berkovich (Berkowitz), *Undzerer rishonim: Zikbroynes, dertseylungen vegn Sholem-Aleykhem un zayn dor*, vol. 2 (Tel Aviv, 1966), 202–10.

⁶ On Kabak's role in Grodno, particularly in the self-defense organization, see, e.g., Y. Ovasy, "A. A. Kabak hazair: Divrei zikhronot," *Bitzaron* 12, no. 10 (1945): 314–16. *Daniel Shafranov* was his first full-length novel published after the revolution, and he reports work on what appears to be that book years before its publication (Kabak to G. Shufman, n.d. [1909–10?] in the Kabak file, Schwadron Collection, Dept. of Manuscripts, the Jewish National and University Library, Jerusalem).

possible was the fact that the number of writers, readers, and periodical publications – in Russian, Polish, and Hebrew but primarily in Yiddish – had grown rapidly over the previous 15 years, and especially since 1903. Moreover, in October 1905 the writers found themselves suddenly liberated from censorship, which was only restored hesitantly in 1907 and thereafter.

The significance of such works for the literary historian is self-evident and has been brilliantly demonstrated by Mikhail Krutikov in *Yiddish Fiction and the Crisis of Modernity*, which includes a chapter on the “crisis of revolution.” (In this book he sets himself the task of analyzing “the encounter of Yiddish literature with modernity.”)⁷ But the value of belles lettres as a subject for the political historian (such as myself) who might normally prefer to examine fact rather than fiction requires, perhaps, some words of explanation. First, it has to be remembered that the allegiance of all five writers (with Sholem Aleichem only a partial exception) to the realist or naturalist schools of literature committed them deeply to the ideal of fiction as an accurate, albeit artistically transmuted, reflection of the social and political world that they themselves knew intimately.

Second, this fact gains particular importance because there is such a relative paucity of diaries and personal correspondence surviving from 1905. Belles lettres thus fills an important gap. Although the newspapers and other periodicals contain ample coverage of major events (strikes, demonstrations, armed clashes, pogroms) and of party politics (conferences, programs, ideologies, polemics), it is the contemporary fiction that allows us – often more accurately than autobiography – a rare glimpse (through the writer’s eyes) into the day-to-day life of the individual on the street, among party comrades, or in the family.

Finally, much can be learned about the attitudes prevalent among the Jewish intelligentsia at the time by observing the different ways in which the various authors chose to represent the great events through which they had just lived. The periodicals tended to follow, if not always a party line, then at least a general line, thus producing a deceptive impression of monolithic blocs. The writers, drawing on their own personal and intuitive perceptions, remind us how varied the reactions to the revolution would have been at the private (as against the public) level.

In specific terms, the aim of this chapter is to focus on how the youth, acting as the vanguard of the insurrection in the Russian-Jewish

⁷ M. Krutikov, *Yiddish Fiction and the Crisis of Modernity, 1905–1914* (Stanford, 2001), 1.

sub-world, were depicted by An-sky in *In shtrom* and in the other four works selected here for comparative purposes.

Of course, historians have long given weight to the fact that, though the revolution in the Russian heartland was driven forward primarily by the industrial proletariat and the peasantry, among the Jewish population this role fell to a radicalized youth drawn from all classes of society. The political mobilization of the young generation can be explained by a combination of factors: a rate of demographic growth that far surpassed the country-wide average (extrapolating from the census of 1897, it emerges that in 1905 approximately half of the Jewish population was composed of young people between 10 and 29 years old⁸ – the dangerous age-group for the regime); the dire poverty that divided the great majority from the well-settled and sometimes even wealthy minority of the Jews; the deepening sense of alienation felt toward a regime regarded since 1881 as increasingly hostile to its Jewish subjects and as responsible for the pogroms; and, finally, the belief that the inevitable march of progress – and an entire people in revolt across the length and breadth of the empire – were about to sweep that regime away.

However, though this phenomenon has always been recognized, its impact on the everyday milieu was rarely described in the contemporary press. The predominant role played by the youth in the Jewish revolution was so taken for granted, so much assumed as a fact of life, that it stimulated relatively little commentary. But the opposite was the case with regard to the works of fiction published at the time. The revolt of the young generation was a theme that, perhaps more than any other, fascinated the writers.

How did they represent and evaluate that revolt? Where do their descriptions overlap, and where do they differ? How distinctive was the picture painted by An-sky in *In shtrom*?

The story An-sky tells in his novella is tightly bound within a unity of space and time. Set in a small White Russian town called N., it starts and ends within the space of a few days. (The town was clearly modeled on Vitebsk, which An-sky knew well from his school days and in which he spent lengthy stays in 1906–7.)⁹ The period of the year is June – a

⁸ See, e.g., Table A/2 (“Age Distribution of the Jewish Population, 1897”) in Arkadius Kahan, *Essays in Jewish Social and Economic History* (Chicago, 1986), 50.

⁹ For a summary of the police reports on An-sky in Vitebsk (where he was briefly arrested in Jan. 1907), see V. Lukin, “Ot narodnichestva k narodu (S. A. An-skii – etnograf vostochno-evropeiskogo evreistva),” in D. A. Eliashevich, ed., *Evrei v Rossii: Istoriia i kul'tura; sbornik nauchnykh trudov* (St. Petersburg, 1995), 126, 148 n. 8.

moment in 1905 when the revolution was fast gaining momentum and when hopes were running high. This choice of time meant that An-sky was able to focus on the groundswell of young energy and enthusiasm while entirely bypassing the issue of the October pogroms.

Two major developments that marked the early period of the revolution in many parts of the Pale of Settlement provided An-sky with his primary subject matter: the unprecedented political mobilization of “the people,” on the one hand, and the emergence of the Bund as the dominant party, on the other. Although the terms “the people” and “the party” carry with them a ring of gravitas, An-sky makes it clear that in both cases those primarily involved are teenagers or in their twenties. The exceptions are, at the one end, Dovid, “somebody from the oldstyle Bundist school,”¹⁰ who at the grand age of 30 is a veteran in control of all the party’s most clandestine activities in the town (the secret printing press and the armed self-defense unit), and, at the other end, Hirshke, an 11-year-old, who (in his mother’s words) is “like everyone else; he’s on the go for days on end. Nothing else interests him at all. Everything is booklets, action, the *birzhe*. It could drive one mad.”¹¹

The *birzhe* (the “bourse” or “exchange”) was the term used at the time to describe the informal meeting places – a city street or square, perhaps – where members of the banned socialist movements in a given town gathered to pass on information, news, or instructions. Until 1905, it had stayed as far as possible hidden, but, as the grip of the regime weakened, it emerged into the open. As with other such institutions, it was mentioned frequently in the newspapers and, later, in memoirs but was rarely described in detail. For An-sky, though, it represented all that was most impressive in the Jewish revolt. As a veteran member of the Russian populist movement, a *narodnik*, he saw in the expansion of the *birzhe* a spontaneous response of the (younger) population to the call for liberty, and therefore a profoundly moving phenomenon.

In the past, we read in An-sky’s novella, the city park used to be monopolized by the well-established classes, “and the poor, the workers, kept themselves away”; now the tables have been turned and the “well-washed” expelled.¹² During the long summer evenings, the park serves as the site of the workers’ *birzhe*:

¹⁰ *Der fraynd*, no. 9 (Jan. 11/24, 1907); *Gsh* 9, 27 (“epes fun dem alten bundishen kheyder”); NV, 128; *S. soch.* 4, 71 (“staraia bundovskaia zakvaska!”).

¹¹ *Der fraynd*, no. 14 (Jan. 18/31, 1907); *Gsh* 9, 36; NV, 137; *S. soch.* 4, 79.

¹² *Der fraynd*, no. 8 (Jan. 10/23, 1907); *Gsh* 9, 18; NV, 109; *S. soch.* 4, 52–53.

The great majority of the people are workers and shop-assistants, young men and women – with the women in a clear majority. Here and there is to be seen a high school, or university, student in uniform. . . . The men are mainly in long [belted] shirts, either black or blue, and in peaked caps; the women in calico blouses, wearing cheap straw hats. . . . Apart from the main crowds which move slowly along, there are groups standing on the paths off to the side. . . . In some, the [party] representatives are distributing booklets and brochures to the members of the *kruzhki* [circles]; in others instructions are being given, party meetings or appointments arranged. . . . Particularly lively are the groups where representatives of rival parties lock in debate. Here one can hear caustic comments, biting words and telling jokes, laughter and youthful enthusiasm.¹³

The birzhe has its “constitution,” and the avenues in the park are strictly divided between the parties and the factions. The Bund as the largest party in N. is in control of the central walkways, while the others are shared out between the Social Democrats, the Social Revolutionaries, and the socialist Zionists of various denominations; two or three of the paths are kept neutral, and it is there that the representatives of different parties conduct their disputations or diplomatic negotiations.¹⁴

And all these working youngsters who have just left their airless factories, their dingy workshops, their shop counters, with no time to rest and often hungry, walk around here full of life and energy. One cannot but feel that in this compact area, in these few hundred square meters, is concentrated all the spiritual life of the working masses, all the poetry of their existence.¹⁵

It is at the birzhe that Basha, a factory worker barely out of her teens, serves as the liaison between the Bund (she is a member of its city-wide triumvirate) and the rank-and-file mass of the party sympathizers. Upon her falls the task of coordinating the Bund's study-circles and mass meetings – “in a word all the practical work of the organization.”¹⁶ An-sky paints Basha as often angry or resentful, no saint, but nonetheless genuinely heroic. Already a survivor of many months in prison, working a full day on the factory floor and yet a linchpin in the Bundist organization, she is left with few hours to eat or sleep. It is largely through her eyes that the reader observes key episodes in the novella. One of “the people,” self-educated and totally devoted to the cause, she was a true heroine for An-sky.

¹³ *Der fraynd*, no. 46 (Feb. 26/Mar. 11, 1907); an editorial note apologized for the long wait since the publication of the previous installment – caused, it can be guessed, by An-sky himself, or perhaps by a translator, but not by the temporarily paralyzed censorship. *Gsh* 9, 48–49; *NV*, 154–55; *S. soch.* 4, 94–95. On the place of the birzhe in *In shtrom*, see Krutikov, *Yiddish Fiction and the Crisis of Modernity*, 80–81.

¹⁴ *Der fraynd*, no. 8 (Jan. 10/23, 1907); *Gsh* 9, 19; *NV*, 109–10; *S. soch.* 4, 53.

¹⁵ *Der fraynd*, no. 46 (Feb. 26/Mar. 11, 1907); *Gsh* 9, 49–50; *NV*, 154–55; *S. soch.* 4, 95.

¹⁶ *Der fraynd*, no. 46 (Feb. 26/Mar. 11, 1907); *Gsh* 9, 47; *NV*, 152; *S. soch.* 4, 93.

Given its depths at that time, the generational gap was a subject naturally assigned a prominent place in the novella. (Even apart from the immediate realities, it had after all become a favorite theme for writers in the tsarist empire at least since Ivan Sergeyevich Turgenev's novel of 1862, *Fathers and Sons*, a title later adopted for a work of his own by Mendele Moykher Sforim.) In the course of the narrative, An-sky of course makes clear how acute the cultural gulf had become that divided the older generation (which in a provincial town like Vitebsk in varying degrees followed a traditional way of life) from the youngsters who, once drawn into the revolutionary movements, tended to see socialism with its own imperatives, its (supposedly) scientific certainties, its martyrdom, and its quasi-messianic expectations as totally negating religion.

Toward the end of *In shtrom*, An-sky described an event that had become commonplace in this period: the temporary takeover of synagogues by the revolutionaries in order to deliver their messages, or demands, to the Jewish public at large. In this case it is the Sabbath morning, and the site is

the Old Synagogue [*di alte shul*], which is regarded as the oldest building in N. Built in Catherine's time, it has survived all the storms and disasters that have since then befallen the town; it has witnessed the arrival of the French invaders, a few pogroms, and innumerable fires. Around it, entire streets and quarters of the town have burnt down; generations of houses have decayed, crumbling away; but the synagogue stands, as though untouched by time or by events . . . alone and melancholy, sunk in thousand-year-old thoughts.

Inside the synagogue is a sizeable congregation. At the eastern end are to be found the most important, the best-off, and the most devout. . . . Old men, their heads draped in *talesim*, with stooped backs, are there praying in a monotonous and cheerless sing-song, broken by deep sighs. . . . It is as if they had been carried to the [eastern] wall by the tide of life and left there high and dry, relics from some ancient past. . . .

But on benches further back are congregants in short-cut suits, with trimmed beards or clean shaven; some are praying apathetically, others are silently strolling around the synagogue. At the other end of the hall, near the door, though, there are once again men well on in years, [but they are] poor and ragged. . . . They pray quietly, unpretentiously, but with tortured souls, appealing to their God for at least a spark of mercy, for some faint ray of happiness, of joy.¹⁷

Halfway through the service, as the reading from the Torah scroll is still in progress,

workers, young men and youths, in blue shirts and peaked caps, begin arriving, one at a time, or in small groups. They have a certain way about them: matter-of-fact, self-confident, knowing what they are about, without reverence

¹⁷ *Der fraynd*, no. 97 (May 3/16, 1907); *Gsb* 9, 99-100; *NV*, 251-53; *S. soch.* 4, 178-80.

for the house of prayer. Mingling with the congregants, it is obvious that they are outsiders here, marked off not only by their attire but even more by their look.

It is not hard to guess that, as soon as the reading from the scroll is over, the service will be interrupted for "revolutionary speeches": "The takeover of the synagogues by the revolutionaries has only begun very recently, and . . . even though the people have gradually grown used to this kind of thing too, [it still] . . . causes much disquiet." But those who now try to make a hasty exit find the doors locked, guarded by unyielding and laconic members of the Bundist "fighting organization" (*kampf-organizatsiye* or *boevoi otriad*):

And the majority, without questions or arguments, go back to their seats, albeit with protest clearly written on their faces.

And when somebody starts banging on the door, demanding to be let out, one of the guards says coolly, very much in command:

"It's not going to help. You're not leaving."

"But I have to get home," the man begins to boil.

"Just calm down!"

"What do you mean calm down? You're going to force me to stay here to listen to your speeches?" (this said with still greater agitation).

"Yes!" says the guard calmly looking him straight in the eye.

The man stands there not saying a word, then suddenly spits off to the side and, deeply upset, exclaims:

"It'd be ten times better to fall into the hands of the *pogromshchiki* than into yours!"¹⁸

An-sky could well have been setting the scene here for a head-on confrontation between the assembled congregation and the Bundists. But his intention was, in reality, just the opposite. Throughout *In shtrom*, he was determined to show that, despite the chasm dividing the outlook of the traditionalists from that of the rebels, both sides in fact recognized that they were bound together by a common fate. Thus, in the Old Synagogue on that Sabbath morning, the imprisoned congregation eventually stops its heckling and allows the Bundist (selected for his oratorical abilities) to speak – "otherwise there'll be no end to it!"¹⁹ It turns out that he is there not for confrontation but to win support, and he makes every effort to argue that the Bund is committed not only to Marxist doctrine but also to the Jewish cause:

The Jewish proletariat is fighting for its class interests, but at the same time it fights for the freedom and life of the Jewish people. And if the Jews gain their human and civil rights they will owe it entirely to the proletariat. . . . And if a final

¹⁸ *Der fraynd*, no. 97 (May 3/16, 1907); *Gsh* 9, 101–2; *NV*, 255–56; *S. soch.* 4, 181–82.

¹⁹ *Der fraynd*, no. 97 (May 3/16, 1907); *Gsh* 9, 103; *NV*, 257; *S. soch.* 4, 183.

end is put to pogroms then again it will only be because the organized Jewish proletariat with weapons in hand brought the mob to a halt, risking life and limb to defend Jewish homes from destruction, old men and children from slaughter, and women from violation. And those of you who – knowing that – didn't want to let a representative of the proletariat say a few words here should simply be ashamed of yourselves.²⁰

As the speech progresses, the captive audience “hears him out in silence and with mounting interest, gradually pushing forward around the dais.” And once the two speakers have stepped down (the Bundist was followed by a member of Poalei Tsiyon), there remains alone

on the raised platform only the old man who is holding the Torah scrolls tightly to his chest while, below, the young workers in a solid knot encircle the dais. It is as though this symbol of the age-old Jewish world is marooned high on some lonely island while all around its shores are beating the stormy waves of new life, young and strong.

With the workers finally gone, prayers are renewed and the chapter closes with the cantor chanting the Sabbath prayers for the New Moon (Rosh Hodesh): “May He who performed miracles for our fathers and brought them out of slavery to freedom, may He soon redeem us and gather in our dispersed people from all the four corners of the earth, all of Israel one [*kol yisroel khaverim*], and let us say, Amen.”²¹

An-sky returned to the theme of reconciliation in describing the meeting between Matvei (Zelig in his childhood) and his father. In this scene (also discussed by Mikhail Krutikov), the author focused on the armed self-defense units then being established by the Jewish revolutionary parties in response to the danger of pogroms, as the bridge linking the estranged generations. Matvei, one of the top leaders of the Bund at the age of 25, has recently escaped after eight years of penal exile in Siberia and at great risk has arrived back in his hometown of N. to see his father, who is dying of cancer. The father is a Torah scribe, devout in every way possible, but on seeing his son he recalls the account given him recently by a visitor from Gomel of the pogrom there. The *pogromshchiki*, he has been told, had wanted to

slaughter everybody, men, women and children, as in Kishinev. . . . But then the youngsters intervened – the new type who, people say, are not Jews at all, who keep none of the commandments. . . – and they saved the entire Jewish community . . . , defended the women and children.

²⁰ *Der fraynd*, no. 97 (May 3/16, 1907); *Gsh* 9, 104; *NV*, 257–58; *S. soch.* 4, 184.

²¹ *Der fraynd*, no. 97 (May 3/16, 1907); *Gsh* 9, 104–5; *NV*, 259; *S. soch.* 4, 184–86.

He also told me that, when the goyim attacked the synagogues and the prayer houses [*bote-medroshim*], the young people blocked the way and didn't allow the scrolls to be desecrated. Many were killed in the fighting. . . . And they were buried as martyrs [*kedoshim*]. . . . For 40 years I have inscribed Torah scrolls . . . and as much as I could, I have fulfilled God's commandments, but still He did not give me the chance to sacrifice myself for the sake of His holy name [*kidush hashem*]. . . . This privilege has been granted them. . . . My son, there are those who gain the whole world in a single hour [*yesh koneh 'olam besha'ah ahat*].²²

The dying man is sure that Matvei will, if necessary, behave in just the same way and no less courageously. In choosing to highlight the deep bond uniting the professional revolutionary and the Torah scribe, An-sky was clearly suggesting that, however contradictory their beliefs, they still shared a comparable depth of faith and a comparable readiness for self-sacrifice.

That the determination of the youth was wearing down the resistance of the parental generation similarly constituted a key motif woven by An-sky into his depiction of the relationship between Esther (poor, long widowed, the hawker of hot beans [*bob*]) and Basha (the revolutionary leader) – between mother and daughter. When Basha, then in her mid-teens, had first begun to associate with the “democrats,” otherwise known

by all kinds of frightening names – “akhdes,” “brider un shvester,” “statsh-keynikes,” “broyt mit puter,” “royter hemdlekh,” “elektrikes,” etc. – Esther had almost died of fright. She felt as though “the heavens were falling” and “everything's over.” And with all the desperation of the indigent and with all the terror of a mother, she sought to persuade, to beg, her daughter to give up a path that could only lead her to destruction. . . . With beseeching tears in her eyes, Esther threatened her with retribution in this world and with God's vengeance in the next. But Basha remained deaf to it all. . . . And Esther gradually began to get used to her daughter's dangerous behavior just as she had adapted herself to so many misfortunes and deprivations throughout her life. . . .

[But] Basha's first arrest [again] threw her into deep despair. It seemed to her that Basha had fallen so low that now there could be no way back. She mourned for her as one mourns the dead and, at the same time, she felt herself shamed in the eyes of her neighbors and acquaintances – what a cause for gossip, a young girl sitting in prison!

²² *Der fraynd*, no. 20 (Jan. 25/Feb. 7, 1907); *Gsh* 9, 42–43; *NV*, 147–48; *S. soch.* 4, 88–89. (The pogrom in Homel took place in Sept. 1903.) On this passage in *In shtrom*, see Krutikov, *Yiddish Fiction and the Crisis of Modernity*, 81.

When the mass arrests began in town, though, and when it turned out that among those taken in were also the daughters of the best families, Esther reluctantly began to reconcile herself to the idea of her daughter as a jailbird.

As Basha became ever more involved in revolutionary activity (interrupted by a second period in prison),

Esther without really being aware of the fact began to become accustomed to the great change that had taken place in her life and in that all around her. She became used to Basha's being a member of the "Organization" and deep in her heart was even proud of it.²³

An-sky's compassionate depiction of the relationship between the rebel youth and the traditional world they had renounced, but not deserted, clearly reflected the populism stamped deeply into his psyche ever since his school days. For all their root-and-branch rejection of tradition, the Bund and the other Jewish socialist parties were, as he saw it, not only defending their people but – in paradoxical and dialectical ways – even revitalizing its profoundest and most ancient values. Instinctively understanding this truth, the people were willing to yield ground to the revolutionaries in their midst.

However, the picture of the Bund that is built up over the course of *In shtrom*, while extraordinarily positive, is not uncritical. And this fact should, of course, come as no surprise. On the one hand, An-sky had long admired the Bund and some years earlier (while living in Bern, a center of the Russian-Jewish student youth) had written two songs for the party, *Di shvue* (The Oath) and *Tsum Bund* (To the Bund), which had become unusually popular and were frequently sung at demonstrations during the revolution. (It must have given An-sky some wry satisfaction to slip into his novella mention of how the words of *Di shvue* had rung out over the May Day march of 1905 in the town of N.)²⁴ But, on the other hand, An-sky had never joined the Bund, preferring membership in the Party of Socialist Revolutionaries (PSR), an interethnic ("internationalist"),

²³ *Der fraynd*, no. 8 (Jan. 10/23, 1907); *Gsh* 9, 16–17; *NV*, 106–7; *S. soch.* 4, 50–51. *Akhdas* (Hebrew: *ahdut*) – like *organizatsiye* (the Organization) – was a term often applied to the Bund. The word *statshkeynikes* derived from the Russian *stachka* (a strike), and *elektrikes* from the idea that the socialists believed in material rather than the divine origin of man (see *S. soch.* 4, 50 n. 4). The Russian text refers to "blue" – not "red" – shirts, and it includes two additional names for the revolutionaries: *filozofy* (philosophers) and *arabstvennye* (literally, "Arabics," but derived from *nравstvennye*, meaning roughly "the moralists").

²⁴ *Der fraynd*, no. 2 (Jan. 3/16, 1907); *Gsh* 9, 13; *NV*, 102; *S. soch.* 4, 47. "Rabochii narod" (The Working People) was another very popular song recalled here.

empire-wide party that saw itself as heir to the traditions of Russian populism.

What An-sky did in his novella was to allow a variety of voices from "the people" to question both the organizational structure and the operational decisions of the party (the Bund). All the protagonists were given their say, but no one was permitted a decisive victory.²⁵

In the course of *In shtrom*, no less than four aspects of Bundist practice and policy become the subject of controversy. Most central to the narrative is the question of the relationship between the workers and the intelligentsia within the movement. What triggers discussion of this issue is Basha's intense irritation when, by chance, she catches sight of Yankev Barakanov (a student from a wealthy family, but like her a member of the party triumvirate) coming out of a theater with a young woman generally regarded as empty-headed. Even though Basha has also on occasion gone to the theater, she finds herself seething with anger at the sight of the crowd ("well-dressed men, women in fashionable dresses, wearing diamonds") – in short, here is "the bourgeoisie about which we're always talking, against which we're fighting so bitter a war, which we hate so much."²⁶ All her resentment of Barakanov, rooted in the double difference of class and gender, now comes welling up. "A 'comrade'" she mutters to herself, and

scattered recollections of meetings and conversations with Barakanov begin coming to mind. He has always behaved toward her in a straightforward and comradely manner, never giving any indication that there is a great difference between them in their social positions. But has he ever shown the slightest interest in her life, her soul, her mood? Has he ever tried to act toward her as a true friend, as a "comrade" in the sense that the word is understood among the workers? . . . Never! . . .

She recalls how Barakanov, in committee meetings, often does not let her finish what she's saying and simply puts forward his own ideas, not taking hers into account. And it usually turns out that they're his proposals that are adopted. Of course, he's much better educated, but why should he win even on practical issues? It's because he knows how to phrase his thoughts effortlessly and clearly. . . . So,

²⁵ David G. Roskies has made note of the fact that *In shtrom* was greeted with no more than "muted praises" at the time from Bundist critics ("S. Ansky and the Paradigm of Return," in Jack Wertheimer, ed., *The Uses of Tradition: Jewish Continuity in the Modern Era* [New York, 1992], 244). But not even such guarded praise was forthcoming from a Zionist critic such as S. L. Tsitron, who described the novella as "untrue to life in both the psychological and artistic – and even the photographic – sense" ("Der letster fun der dray," *Lebn* no. 11 [1920]: 33).

²⁶ *Der fraynd*, no. 49 (Mar. 1/14, 1907); *Gsh* 9, 58; *NV*, 174; *S. soch.* 4, 112–13. (In the Russian version, Barakanov is called not Yankev, but Khaim.)

even though she's considered a fully equal member of the committee, it turns out that she's simply carrying out what others want. . . .

And do the other *intelligenty* act differently? . . . They come to the workers only to lord it over them. They've gained control of the Central Committee, and they've forced their way into all the other committees, seizing command. Is it surprising that there's so much dissatisfaction and so much grumbling against the intelligentsia, or that "oppositions" are constantly forming themselves?²⁷

When Basha puts it to Dovid (the third member of the triumvirate who, like her, is from a poor family, and impoverished) that the time has come to take the intelligentsia in the Bund down a few pegs, he strongly disagrees. After all, he asks, "among the workers themselves aren't there divisions, and sharp ones at that, between 'superiors' and 'inferiors' . . . ? Doesn't the worker who's read a dozen brochures preen himself and look down on the worker who hasn't read them?"²⁸ Besides, everybody knows how irrational the attitude of the workers is to the *intelligenty*: at first they idolize them, and then "after a year or two, when they see that the *intelligent* is no god but simply a human being like everyone else, the mud-slinging begins . . . ; he's accused of everything under the sun and 'oppositions' are set up."²⁹

The simple truth is that the Bund has need of more, not fewer, members from the intelligentsia:

Of course, it would be better if the workers ran the labor movement. But the workers don't have the forces to do it. That's not the fault of the intelligentsia but of the social structure that doesn't permit the working class to produce *teoretiki* and political activists. . . . And until that changes, the *intelligenty* are needed – especially in our case. Our party has fewer members from the intelligentsia than the other parties, and we're ready to treat even the few who work with us like dogs!³⁰

Basha sees the point in what Dovid is saying, but she remains resentful. (The reader is thus left with the impression that, at the intellectual level, as a committed revolutionary, An-sky identified with Dovid's position, and at the emotional level, as a life-long populist, with Basha's.)

Hardly less salient an issue in the novella is the question of "personal terror," meaning politically motivated assassination. Very early in the work, the news spreads that a particularly unpopular policeman in the

²⁷ *Der fraynd*, no. 49 (Mar. 1/14, 1907); *Gsh* 9, 61; NV, 177–79; *S. soch.* 4, 115–17.

²⁸ *Der fraynd*, no. 49 (Mar. 1/14, 1907); *Gsh* 9, 66; NV, 183; *S. soch.* 4, 120.

²⁹ *Der fraynd*, no. 49 (Mar. 1/14, 1907); *Gsh* 9, 67–68; NV, 184; *S. soch.* 4, 121. In these passages on the idea of the intelligentsia in the Bund, the Yiddish text is, unusually, fuller than the Russian.

³⁰ *Der fraynd*, no. 49 (Mar. 1/14, 1907); *Gsh* 9, 68; NV, 185; *S. soch.* 4, 121–22.

town has been shot and killed. Much excited speculation then erupts as people wonder which organization might be responsible. And the general assumption is that this was the work of the PSR – a party that advocates and carries out selected assassinations – and not of the Bund, which, as a Marxist organization, opposes them.

It emerges finally, though, that the murder was, in fact, the work of a key Bundist activist, a typesetter responsible for the party's clandestine press. Opposed in principle to a policy of assassination, he was driven to do the opposite by a deep compulsion. Present two months earlier at a demonstration elsewhere in the Pale, he had seen his sister attacked by the police and later found her among the dead; his father, a man not involved in politics, had by bad luck run into the Cossacks, who had beaten him to within an inch of his life and had knocked out one of his eyes. Sitting up all night next to his sister's corpse, the typesetter seemed to hear her whispering to him, and "I realized that she was saying the one word, *nekome* [revenge]." ³¹ His sister had been a member of the armed wing of the movement, and he now took her revolver, a Browning. Since then he has shot dead no fewer than five men – soldiers and policemen.

On hearing this story, the members of the Bundist committee cannot agree whether to suspend the typesetter or not, with Basha opposed to such a step whatever the official ideology: "There are things that not only we, but not even the Central Committee, nor the party itself, have the right to judge." ³² (Although An-sky here, too, was careful not to introduce his own position into his novella, one cannot but assume that as a member of the PSR he identified with Basha, who is given the strongest – and the final – words in the argument. And here as elsewhere, of course, the author had chosen to introduce controversies with a long and bitter history in reality into his narrative.)

Another fundamental issue in the development of the Bund that found its way onto the pages of *In Shtrom* involved the question of how far the organization should see itself as a Jewish subsection of the general Social Democratic movement in the Russian empire and how far as an independent party committed primarily to the defense of the Jewish proletariat – and, by extension, of the Jewish nation as a whole. As with so many other causes of fierce disagreement, this subject comes to the fore in the novella during the informal give-and-take at the *birzhe*.

³¹ *Der fraynd*, no. 94 (Apr. 29/May 12, 1907); *Gsh* 9, 91; *NV*, 233; *S. soch.* 4, 163. In the Russian text, the word for revenge given in the Yiddish is not *nekome* but *rakbe*.

³² *Der fraynd*, no. 94 (Apr. 29/May 12, 1907); *Gsh* 9, 93; *NV*, 235; *S. soch.* 4, 164.

News has just arrived that the Cossacks in a major city in the Russian heartland “have attacked a crowd of demonstrators, workers, and *intelligently*, treating them with the greatest brutality and leaving dozens killed and some 100 wounded.” In response to this information, the cry goes up at the *birzhe* calling for a demonstration of protest to be mounted immediately. All agree that an action of this kind has to involve the participation not only of the Bund but also of both the PSR and the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party:

“And what about the Poalei Tsiyon . . .,” somebody asks tentatively.

“We can manage without them. What kind of socialists are they anyway?” shot back [a] slightly built [Bundist] worker.

“You don’t have to worry,” angrily responds a young man who is standing some way off and, neatly dressed, looks like a shop-assistant. “We’re no less revolutionaries and socialists than you are. And maybe we’ll decide for ourselves not to join your demonstration.”

“What,” asks a middle-aged woman, a worker, sarcastically, “you think it’s beneath you?”

“Yes, it would be beneath us,” responds the shop-assistant loudly, growing excited, “. . . We’d feel ashamed if you, as Jews, were to organize a demonstration about the massacre in [the interior], when you didn’t demonstrate after the pogrom in Zhitomir! When it was Jews who were being cut to pieces, you didn’t put yourselves out and didn’t think that you had to protest before the whole world! But now when the ones being killed are Russians, you’re suddenly all terribly outraged! I really feel ashamed when I think that you call yourselves Jews!!”

Toward the end he is shouting in hysterical tones and with tears in his eyes. His speech has made an impression on a few people, but the rest of the crowd clearly expresses extreme irritation in gestures and words. And then [that same Bundist] worker steps forward to face the shop-assistant.

“Stop your shouting and forget about your being ashamed on our account,” he says with a cruel calm. “We’ve heard enough of your screaming. And I tell you: we wouldn’t have had anything against a demonstration about the Zhitomir pogrom.” . . .

“You’d have had nothing against . . .” repeated the shop-assistant after him, bitter and ironic.

“Shut up, let him talk,” come shouts from the crowd.

“But,” continues the worker, “I consider the demonstration about the massacre [in the Russian town] to be far more important! A demonstration by us about the pogrom would have been seen as simply an expression of national solidarity. A demonstration about [the new] massacre will have significance for the revolution and will be an act of pure proletarian solidarity.”³³

³³ *Der fraynd*, no. 59 (Mar. 13/26, 1907); *Gsh* 9, 76–77; *NV*, 208–9; *S. soch.* 4, 141–42.

In this case, as elsewhere, An-sky left the reader to guess where his own sympathies lay. The young Zionist socialist was certainly given powerful lines, but the crowd was against him and, other things being equal, An-sky would have tended to the side of the *vox populi*. Moreover, as we shall discuss below, this debate at the birzhe paralleled in some ways the ideological confrontation between Simon Dubnov and An-sky that had taken place in the winter of 1905–6; there Dubnov had taken a position similar to that defended by the shop-assistant in the novella, with An-sky sharply opposed.

Clearly linked to the question of the relationship between the Bund and the revolutionary Marxist movement in Russia as a whole was a still broader issue that began to cause soul-searching during the course of 1905. Was it possible that the huge uprising of the industrial workers and peasants in the Russian heartland had begun to marginalize, and render irrelevant, the Jewish insurrection in the Pale of Settlement?

This position is put forcefully to Basha during an evening stroll down to the water mill taken with Sender, a childhood friend and ex-comrade who had left the Bund to join the PSR and only recently returned to town after a long absence. (The entire episode, which takes up 10 pages of the Russian text, was omitted from the Yiddish version.)

Sender is no longer in any party, and Basha reproaches him in the name of solidarity and organization. "Organization," interrupts Sender with a sarcastic smile,

"just imagine what enormous power your organization, your Bund, has all the way from great Ishishok to famous Kasrilevke! The Bund was a force when the revolution was just beginning, when Russia was still immobile. Then, one strike of Jews in Dubrovna was a real event [and] a demonstration of a few dozen people truly epoch-making. . . . Now, when the revolution is bringing rebels in their tens and hundreds of thousands into the streets; when strikes involve millions of workers; when the movement has pulled warships into its wake – what significance does your Bund have with its handful of would-be 'proletarians'? It's all so small, so pathetic and wretched. . . ."

Seizing Basha's hand, he softens his tone: "Don't think, Basha, that I'm saying this as an opponent of the Bund, that I'm trying to wound you. Absolutely not."

"I don't think that," Basha interrupts. "But I repeat, you are terribly unjust when you divide off the Jewish proletariat from the general revolutionary movement."

"It's not me," Sender responds, "who's doing the dividing; it's the Bund itself that has split itself off. . . . I'm not condemning it. I understand very well why it left the Party . . . , but I also understand why so many people are going over to the Party and the PSR. Once you're going to throw yourself into the revolutionary waves, then let it be into the wide ocean and not into some babbling brook. . . ."

“You know,” says Basha with irritation, “it’s quite possible to navigate the ocean in one’s own boat and with one’s own rudder.”³⁴

Reading this long and emotional interchange (from which this is only a short extract), it is possible – as so often throughout the novella – to sense that An-sky identified himself with both of the opposing protagonists. He was, it would seem, sharply torn between his profound sympathy for the Bund as a movement sprung from deep within the Jewish people, and his rational calculation that the revolutionary cause required the Jews to join one of the major “internationalist,” empire-wide parties.

In shtrom concludes as a spontaneous demonstration is taking place on the Sabbath afternoon to protest the attempt of the authorities to expel the birzhe from the city park. Flags are raised; the marchers are united as they join in singing the familiar revolutionary songs. In the distance, Esther hears shots. And the reader is left to wonder whether her 13-year-old daughter, Mirele, who, like her sister Basha, is already totally immersed in Bundist activities and is at the front of the march, has been wounded or killed.³⁵

When compared with the other four works of fiction mentioned earlier in this chapter, An-sky’s *In shtrom* emerges as clearly distinctive in significant ways. Yet his choice of themes and of emphasis, as is only to be expected, frequently overlapped those selected by one or more (sometimes all) of the other authors.

Thus, most important, all five books focused on the flow and the upsurge of the revolution in the months that would culminate in the Manifesto of October 17, not on the ebb tide that set in immediately afterward. The threat of pogroms was not ignored (we have seen how the

³⁴ NV, 239–41; *S. soch.* 4, 168–69. The references in this passage to “the Party” are to the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP), which the Bund helped to found at its First Congress in 1898 and which it left at the Second Congress in 1903; it rejoined the RSDLP at the Fourth (Stockholm) Congress in April 1906. *Iskrovtsy* was a term used loosely at the time to describe all members of the RSDLP, although the journal *Iskra* was then under the control of the Menshevik wing of the party.

³⁵ Mirele appears prominently in the Russian version but only very briefly in the Yiddish. As a young girl, just entering her teens, she tends to touch on awkward matters that discomfort Basha. For example: at supper one evening she introduces the subject, first, of the emigration fever sweeping through the town’s Jewish population (“‘Who isn’t leaving?’ whispers Esther, depressed”) and, second, of the derogatory language used in interparty disputes (“‘Why are the Zionists called simply ‘bourgeois’ and the PSR ‘petty bourgeois?’” (*NV*, 121–23; *S. soch.* 4, 64–66). The lengthy omissions in the Yiddish text reduce the polyphonic and complex character of the novel, rendering it more one-dimensional (and even, to an extent, propagandistic).

pogroms in Kishinev, Gomel, and Zhitomir had impressed themselves on the consciousness of the Jews in An-sky's novella), but the central theme remained the excitement, the euphoria, of the heady days when the revolution gained momentum from day to day. Only Sholem Aleichem, toward the close of *Der mabl*, actually described a pogrom (he himself had lived through the one in Kiev), but he admitted that he would not try "to describe even a tenth"³⁶ of the actual suffering.

Like An-sky, then, his fellow authors chose to follow the lives of the protagonists against the backdrop of the strikes, demonstrations, and spreading violence (the political terrorism, the Cossacks) that took over the streets during the summer and autumn months. And the driving force behind it all was the youth.

So, for example, Weissenberg too made dramatic use in *A shtetl* of the way in which the socialists were then temporarily commandeering synagogues. His work opens in a dimly lit prayer house (*beys-medresh*) as the ritualized routine of the place is about to be interrupted by the group of young men, "faces aglow, caps perched rakishly on their heads," who are standing "calmly in the very back near the stove."³⁷

Women are not involved in the politics of Weissenberg's Polish shtetl, and the youths are astounded to hear that "in the large towns girls are also taking part." ("You mean that they are actually mixing in?" asks one of them in disbelief.)³⁸ But young women were assigned a major role not only by An-sky but also by Spektor (Esther, the rebellious daughter of the all-powerful factory owner, Avrom Zilbertsvayg); by Sholem Aleichem (Tamara Shostapol, the medical student in love with one of the leading terrorists in the PSR, a Ukrainian, and Masha Bashevich, a revolutionary organizer on a mythical scale); and by Kabak, among whose central characters no fewer than five were of the female sex. (Yosef Hayim Brenner's comment was that Kabak, like so many authors, had chosen to build up his hero, Daniel Shafranov, "by having all the women attracted to him.")³⁹

³⁶ Sholem Aleichem, "Der mabl," *Di varhayt*, no. 523 (June 25, 1907); republished in book form as *Der mabl: Roman* (Warsaw, n.d.), 421 (henceforth: *Der mabl*).

³⁷ *A shtetl*, 4. For the English translation, see Ruth Wisse, ed., *A Shtetl and Other Yiddish Novellas* [Detroit, 1986], 30.

³⁸ *A shtetl*, 17; Wisse, ed., *Shtetl*, 39.

³⁹ Yosef Haim Brenner "Rishme kore," *Hapo'el hazair*, nos. 22–23 (3 Elul 5672/Aug. 16, 1912): 12; also in his *Ketavim* (Tel Aviv, 1985), vol. 3, 804. Brenner's estimate here of Kabak's novel was often sharply ironic, particularly at the expense of Shafranov, his relationship with women, and his "empty Zionism, a kind of salon Zionism." But he did grant that "generally speaking, the novel captures something of the atmosphere of those

However, when it came to the representation of the relations between fathers and sons (or daughters), An-sky's approach differed markedly from that to be found in the other works. Where An-sky sought out the reconciliation between the generations (as the parents were radically pulled into the wake of the children), the other four chroniclers of the period emphasized, at least when dealing with the spring and summer of 1905, confrontation and outright hostility.

In depicting this theme, Sholem Aleichem characteristically leavened realism with humor, but in so doing he was able to demonstrate with particular effectiveness just how deep a gulf separated middle age from youth.⁴⁰ There can be few better examples than the scene in which Tamara Shostapol (home for a short stay from St. Petersburg university) agrees – much to the surprise and delight of her wealthy, pompous father and brow-beaten mother – to ask the four questions at the Passover seder, only then to put aside the Haggadah and launch an assault. If, she asks coolly, this is a festival of liberation from slavery and exile,

so, first, tell me what have we – I mean you and I, and your parents and all our ancestors – done from ancient times until now, to win this freedom? Second, I want to know is this what the entire Jewish people actually wants? I mean, do all the Jews the world over want the Messiah to lead us to the promised land? Or are there in fact... very many who have no desire... to be led from a civilized country... to a land even more backward than ours?... Third,... I want to know, is this story of the Messiah and Jerusalem anything more than an ancient prayer... written just for our most distant ancestors? Fourth, in that case, what nowadays is the point of this entire comedy?⁴¹

Aghast, Tamara's father tries to come up with a response, but there is nothing effective that he can do against the impregnable self-confidence of this young woman who sees the future simply as the negation of the past. (The downtrodden mother observes the defeat of her domineering husband with barely concealed satisfaction.)

days, when the current carried all before it – even if the element of the fear then so strong is not fully conveyed" (Brenner, *Ketavim*, 3: 805). For Shimon Halkin's disagreement with Brenner and his more positive view of *Daniel Shafranov*, see "Hageula besipure A. A. Kabak," *Bitzaron* 12, no. 10 (1945): 283–86.

⁴⁰ Dan Miron has commented on the markedly Dickensian element to be found in much of Sholem Aleichem's work: "melodrama punctuated by comic interventions" (*Sholem Aleichem: Pirke masa* [Ramat Gan, 1970], 127). For other insights into Sholem Aleichem's narrative style in general (including reference to *Der mabl*), see, e.g., Shmuel Niger, *Sholem Aleichem: Zayne vikhtikste verk, zayn humor un zayn ort in der yidisher literatur* (New York, 1928), and Israel Bartal, "Demut halo-yehudim vehevratam beyezirat Sholem Aleichem," *Hasifrut*, no. 26 (1978): 39–71.

⁴¹ *Di varhayt*, no. 492 (May 26, 1907); *Der mabl*, 248.

In *Daniel Shafranov*, Kabak painted a similar picture, albeit one devoid of humor (typically, perhaps, for the Hebrew-language literature of the time). As in the home of the Shostapols, so in that of the Rabinoviches, the father is a pillar of the community, whereas one son, Volodya, has been expelled from university for his political dissidence, and the other, Syoma, though still in high school, is “already an activist and an effective speaker at meetings – as a spokesman for the workers, who have control of the street, he is even held in some awe by the employers.”⁴² The tension in the family is palpable, and one afternoon Daniel Shafranov is witness as the father explodes in frustration:

“This Syoma here... I’m bringing up an enemy in my own house!... Every day in the office... I hear stories that here a bomb’s been thrown, somewhere else... there’s a robbery, or, as they call it, an ‘expropriation’... and the boycotts, the strikes, the murders!... I curse the revolutionaries, but nobody believes me and I know what they’re thinking – what about your own sons?”

Syoma continues to eat, to drink his tea, glancing at a book as if nothing that this primitive and elderly man was saying is of any concern to him. Volodya raises his head from the sofa, looks calmly at his father, and says in easy tones: “Dad, let me give you a piece of advice. Condemn us publicly and by name, and then you won’t have to feel embarrassed anymore. It will be all our responsibility then, won’t it?”

Rabinovich paces back and forth across the room... and then suddenly, red in the face, stands over his son, speaking with contempt: “Your responsibility... Yours and Syoma’s? That really is a joke. Since when has that been, Volodya? You know that this is empty talk... You’ve never earned a single penny in your lives. Not a penny!”⁴³

Later in the year, Rabinovich finally expels Syoma from the house (he had threatened to call his father’s employees out on strike).

Such confrontations were assigned a pivotal place in all the works under consideration here, with the notable exception of *In shtrom*. However, when it came to the question of how to situate the generational conflict within the architectonic framework of their narratives, the writers chose radically different paths. Sholem Aleichem and Spektor, for example, both used the fact that their stories unfolded over time (in contrast to the static setting adopted by An-sky) in order to shift the emphasis from total irreconcilability in the beginning to weary reconciliation at the end.

In Spektor’s novella, the young daughter, Esther Zilbertsvayg, finally negotiates a settlement of the strike in her father’s factory in order to save

⁴² A. A. Kabak, *Daniel Shafranov* (Warsaw, 1912), 13–14.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 16–17.

him and the entire shtetl from a hopeless fight to the finish. (She fears that the utter silence reigning in the factory will literally kill her father.)⁴⁴ And in *Der mabl*, an intergenerational cease-fire is forced on the two sides by Tamara's arrest and then by the catastrophic pogrom. Itsik Shostapol leaves no stone unturned to engineer Tamara's release, and she, later, together with her revolutionary comrades, pistols in hand, snatches her parents from danger as the *pogromshchiki* are about to overrun their apartment house.

Both authors displayed a positive attitude toward the revolution. At one point (surely expressing Spektor's sentiments), Esther says to her father: "However much you dig in your heels, you'll not be able to put a stop to the natural advance of progress."⁴⁵ And Sholem Aleichem in *Der mabl*, describing the swell of triumph and of relief in Kiev that greeted the Manifesto of October 17, could write:

One has to have been a slave if only for a single day in order to understand what liberation means, and one has to have felt the heavy hand of the all-mighty despotism to understand what is freedom . . . and to understand what a constitution means in this vast land sunk in serfdom and darkness for so many centuries . . . If I say that the street was full of people, that would not be it; I have to say that it was a flood that caught up the streets in its swell and flow. Not people but entire streets were on the move, and the heads were like ears of wheat in the field, slowly moving, moving back and forth blown by a gentle breeze.⁴⁶

Yet for all the revolutionary sentiments, the overall impression left in their respective novellas by Spektor and Sholem Aleichem differs greatly from that made by *In shtrom*. An-sky's work closes with a demonstration, but as *Avrom Zilbertsvayg* and *Der mabl* are brought to their conclusion, the pogroms are casting their long shadow. In Spektor's story, the father escapes abroad while the daughter opts to stay in the shtetl, together with the rest of the Jews, and face possible death. Sholem Aleichem ends his novel with a scene at the railroad station where "all the talk is of 'Libau,' 'Hamburg,' 'tickets for the ship,' 'America' – above all, 'America.'"⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Mordkhe Spektor, "Avrom Zilbertsvayg," *Der fraynd*, no. 26 (Feb. 1/14, 1907); *Ale verk fun M. Spektor*, 2: 41.

⁴⁵ *Der fraynd*, no. 26 (Feb. 1/14, 1907); *Ale verk fun M. Spektor*, 2: 40.

⁴⁶ *Der varhayt*, no. 518 (June 20, 1907); *Der mabl*, 396–97. The text in this case, as frequently elsewhere, was revised in the version published in the *Undzer lebn* of Warsaw. Thus "the bureaucracy" was substituted for "the all-mighty despotism," and the reference to century-old "serfdom" was omitted. Presumably, changes such as these were made in response to the resurgent power of the tsarist regime in the latter half of 1907. (See *Undzer lebn*, no. 211 [Nov. 7/20, 1907].)

⁴⁷ *Di varhayt*, no. 531 (July 3, 1907); *Der mabl*, 454.

The hero of the novel, Sasha Rafalovich, is also there and on his way out, together with a friend, who comments that "the Children of Israel are on the move – a people that has been migrating for two thousand years. Where does it find the strength, where the patience?"⁴⁸

At a superficial level, Kabak's approach might appear to be similar (sympathy for the revolution tempered by fear of the accompanying costs). For instance, he describes how, in the face of a threatened pogrom, the self-defense organization established primarily by the Bundists did – albeit after a bitter display of mutual animosity and at the last minute – receive financial, and other forms of, support from the established leaders of the community. And in a passage reminiscent of An-sky, Kabak recorded a conversation between Shafranov and a young Bundist woman who, armed, is patrolling the streets at night in anticipation of a mob attack. When, provoked by the grim situation, he describes to her how in the Middle Ages pious Jews would kill their wives and children, and then themselves, lest they fall into the hands of their Christian enemies, she responds laconically: "And nowadays the fathers are sound asleep in their beds, while the children are awake to defend them."⁴⁹

However, the underlying tendency pervading Kabak's novel in relation to the revolution was one of ambiguity and of extreme disquiet. On the one hand, Shafranov is ready to admit that "the best of our youth have thrown themselves into the revolution,"⁵⁰ and he has great respect for the Bundist self-defense units "with the simple and warm relationship prevailing among the youngsters – and with attitudes that 'will also make it easier for them to die together.'"⁵¹

But he is profoundly disturbed by what he sees as the sheer fanaticism driving the insurrection forward:

It is . . . hard for Shafranov to meet our young women and young men, and to look into their faces – it is as though they all carry within them not a heart but high explosive dynamite. . . . What other nation has youngsters walking around with faces distorted in this way, with such desperation in their eyes? There's some great drama here. . . . How will it all end? Sometimes it seems to him that the youth in

⁴⁸ *Di varhayt*, no. 532 (July 4, 1907); *Der mabl*, 456. In this case, too, the original New York version is significantly different from that published in Warsaw. In *Di varhayt*, Sasha speaks affirmatively of the wandering Jews, whereas his friend, Kessler, declares it time for them to claim and settle a land of their own. The roles were reversed in the Warsaw edition; Sholem Aleichem was presumably seeking to maintain greater consistency, because Sasha had earlier expressed a clearly territorialist position.

⁴⁹ Kabak, *Shafranov*, 170.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 173.

their haste to root out evil, are lighting a huge fire, and throwing themselves into the flames.⁵²

Unable to identify with the revolution and aware that his own Zionist ideology is fast losing support (“as for Zionism, it’s too late, simply too late!”),⁵³ Daniel Shafranov – left with no way out – commits suicide.⁵⁴ With that act, the novel ends. (Kabak himself, like Sholem Aleichem, joined the tide of emigration.)

If *In shtrom* stood at one pole in its depiction of the revolution on the Jewish street, then Weissenberg’s *A shtetl* was situated at the other. The narrative line in *A shtetl* unfolds with all the inexorable and merciless logic of a Greek tragedy. What begins in the spring, a day or two before Passover, as no more than a youthful prank, a harmless protest against the unfair price of matzot, moves on step by step toward a civil war fought out, albeit in miniature, among the Jews of the shtetl.⁵⁵

Laconically, Weissenberg records the landmarks that trace the downward spiral. Thus, following one harsh free-for-all, which pitched the young socialists (Bundists and followers of the Polish Socialist Party) against the butchers, champions of the traditional order, the ringleader of the radical camp is heard to remark: “A bit of ‘terror’ doesn’t do any harm now and again.”⁵⁶ Not long after, at a rally of the rebel youth, somebody for effect fires off a revolver – “That was the first shot in our shtetl.”⁵⁷ (And now a “deathly fright falls on the place. The houses are as though in mourning and one roof seems to say quietly to the next: today, it is you; tomorrow us.”)⁵⁸ By the summer, people on both sides have been killed. Reinforcements arrive from Warsaw and soon the “entire market square is boiling over like a kettle, and people are running hither and thither with fury in their looks; eyes blood-thirsty; faces aflame. And

⁵² Ibid., 46.

⁵³ Ibid., 73.

⁵⁴ A. Epstein’s comment that Daniel Shafranov is reminiscent of Turgenev’s Rudin (the archetypical “superfluous man” [*lishnyi chelovek*]) is apt. But Epstein also writes that Kabak’s descriptions of the period were “true to reality, all too true” (“Hevle geula: Leha’arakhat yezirato shel A. A. Kabak, z’l,” *Bitzaron* 12, no. 10 [1945]: 245).

⁵⁵ For a wonderfully perceptive analysis of *A shtetl*, and particularly of the way in which Weissenberg used the passing seasons to reinforce his narrative line, see Uriel Weinreich, “Y. M. Vaysenberg’s nit-dershatst ‘Shtetl’: Vegn befrayen a maysterverk fun zayn mekhabers biografye,” *Di goldene keyt* 41 (1961): 135–43. For a critique of the novella as lacking a clear ideological underpinning – without “an artistic goal” – and as the work of a “primitive” writer, see B. Byalastotski, “Y. M. Vaysenberg (1881–1938),” *Di goldene keyt* 21 (1955): 213–14.

⁵⁶ *A shtetl*, 27; Wisse, ed., *Shtetl*, 46.

⁵⁷ *A shtetl*, 29; Wisse, ed., *Shtetl*, 48.

⁵⁸ *A shtetl*, 35; this passage does not appear in the translation.

blood is spraying into the air, over blood-soaked heads and onto the paving stones washed in blood . . . – a slaughter house.”⁵⁹

Even the threat of a pogrom does not serve to reunite the community. As the tables are temporarily turned in favor of the Left by the October Manifesto, the revolutionaries once again march into the beys-medresh, where a large crowd is gathered in order to recite psalms, appealing for divine deliverance from the approaching danger. The Bundist leader, taking over the dais, wastes no time, shouting “What’s all this about psalms? . . . Today’s not a time for psalms, . . . but for fighting with guns.” One of the youngsters draws a revolver and in no time nearly everybody has escaped through the windows. “Nobody remains except a few old men; the rabbi is still seated in his corner with his face to the wall, weeping like a child.”⁶⁰

Even though Weissenberg was known for his naturalistic style, it is not apparent how far *A shtetl* (which is usually identified with the author’s native Zelechow in Congress Poland) was based on personal observation. He was, after all, no longer permanently resident there in 1905. Though undoubtedly matching the realities of the time, the narrative should also be read as an extended metaphor. Violence, however idealistic in origin, Weissenberg was suggesting, only begets counter-violence, creating a cycle of bloodshed and potential catastrophe. And, given the vulnerability of the Jewish people as a minority everywhere within the tsarist empire, this syndrome carried with it a particular danger. In a most telling passage, Weissenberg records a moment of doubt passing through the mind of a young revolutionary when it suddenly occurs to him that

there beyond the town is a great weight of people; while here everything is small, insignificant, hanging by a thread. . . . If for a joke – a goyish joke – each one of them were to come, collect a couple of broken-down doorsteps from our tiny houses, and go on their way, nothing would remain here but empty space.⁶¹

The ideological position held by An-sky in that period was, of course, diametrically opposed to the viewpoint implicit in Weissenberg’s text. When set within An-sky’s political biography, *In shtrom* can be seen as a reiteration of the arguments (now transmitted into fictional and polyphonic form) that he had advanced in his polemical dispute with Dubnow in the winter of 1905–6.

⁵⁹ *A shtetl*, 57–58; Wisse, ed., *Shtetl*, 66–67. ⁶⁰ *A shtetl*, 72–73; Wisse, ed., *Shtetl*, 76.

⁶¹ *A shtetl*, 40; Wisse, ed., *Shtetl*, 55, where the more literal – “held together by a dab of spit” – is preferred.

In his famous article “Lessons of the Terrible Days,” Dubnow had accused the Russian masses (“thousands and tens of thousands of workers, peasants, *meshchane* and *raznochintsy*”) ⁶² of responsibility for the October pogroms, and the Russian revolutionary movement of shameful indifference. And, as for the Jewish socialist parties, they had opted for a policy of class warfare, thus dividing the Jewish people instead of uniting it in the struggle for full equal rights. Sacrificing themselves in the cause of the Russian revolution, they had ignored the fact that the Jewish nationality, like every other, had its own specific interests that had claim to priority. Or as Dubnow put it caustically, addressing the Jewish left, “You are not the makers of the revolution but its servile slaves.” ⁶³

In face of this onslaught, An-sky (in a four-part article published over many weeks in *Voskhod*) did not pull his punches. The pogroms had been made to appear spontaneous, but had actually – since 1881 – been “systematically organized by the government with the simple aim . . . of extinguishing the revolutionary fire with Jewish blood.”

Confronted by the pogroms of the 1880s, the Jewish people had withdrawn back into itself, but in 1903

the Kishinev pogrom had met a new Jewish people, very sensitive to its human worth, storing within itself . . . enormous reserves of militant energy. . . . Above all else, there emerged the thirst for revenge, the sentiment of insulted human dignity. . . . Bialik, with the power and clarity characteristic of him, expressed this general popular mood in his “In the City of Slaughter.” ⁶⁴ . . . The revolutionaries, who twenty years earlier were considered enemies of the [Jewish] people – bringing down on it the vengeance of God, the tsar, and the masses – emerged now as its most reliable champions. Even those who hitherto had been their

⁶² S. Dubnov (Dubnow), “Uroki strashnykh dnei,” *Voskhod*, nos. 47–48 (Dec. 1, 1905): 3. For the English translation, see S. Dubnow, *Nationalism and History Essays on Old and Modern Judaism* (Philadelphia, 1958), 202; however, the translated text of the article is not complete. In using *meshchane* and *raznochintsy*, Dubnow was referring to broad and variegated strata of the middle class, both provincial and metropolitan.

⁶³ *Voskhod* nos. 47–48 (Dec. 1, 1905): 3.

⁶⁴ An-skii, “Uroki strashnykh vekov,” *Voskhod*, no. 8 (Feb. 23, 1906): 7. Bialik’s poem “In the City of Slaughter” (“Ba’ir hahariga”) was largely included, in Yiddish translation, by Sholem Aleichem in *Der mabl* (see esp. 198–202), where it serves the young Jewish nationalist Sasha Rafalovich in his fierce arguments with the beautiful and “internationalist” Tamara Shostapol. When first published, the poem went by the name – employed to circumvent censorship – of “Masa Nemirov” (A Tale from Nemirov). On some of the contemporary translations of, or reactions to, Bialik’s poem, see S. Werses, “Bein tokheha leapologetika: ‘Ba’ir haharega’ shel Bialik umisaviv la,” in his *Milashon el lashon: Yezivot vegilgulehen basifrutenu* (Jerusalem, 1996), 119–52. See also H. Bar-Yosef, “Bialik and the Russian Revolutions,” *Jews in Eastern Europe* (Spring 1996): 5–29.

ideological enemies – denying the validity of any kind of struggle in the Diaspora – ...also began to arm,...complaining that the revolutionaries did not want to work closely enough with them.⁶⁵

True, An-sky admitted, he personally would have much preferred to see the Bund more fully committed to national as well as to class politics:

I consider the harmonious reconciliation of these two kinds of politics not only as possible but as actually essential. In my opinion, the entire corpus of positive cultural treasures created by the Jewish national genius over a period of three thousand years...possesses enormous value not only for the Jews but for all mankind.... This heritage from previous generations has to be preserved, but we must also maintain...its source – the creative national genius of the Jewish people....

And, nonetheless, I would not find in myself the courage to appeal to the Jewish working masses with the *demand* that it undertake to defend national interests at the expense of its own class interests.... And I think that neither Mr. Dubnow nor Mr. Ahad Ha-am, nor the nationalist parties have the right to appeal, as if they had some kind of authority, to the masses with such a demand.⁶⁶

At the time that this article was appearing in *Voskhod*, An-sky was in all probability beginning to ponder the plot of *In shtrom*. There he would seek to transcend such impersonal concepts as “the masses,” “the people,” and bring onstage the individuals, people of flesh and blood, who manned the Bundist committee, marched in demonstrations, or debated the issues of the day at the birzhe in the town of N.

⁶⁵ S. An-skii, “Uroki strashnykh vekov,” *Voskhod*, no. 8 (Feb. 23, 1906): 8.

⁶⁶ S. An-skii, “Uroki strashnykh vekov,” *Voskhod*, no. 10 (Mar. 9, 1906): 9–10.

Yosef Haim Brenner, the “Half-Intelligentsia,” and Russian-Jewish Politics (1899–1908)

Among modern Hebrew writers, Yosef Haim Brenner was ranked high from the moment that his early works of fiction were published in the Russian empire during the first years of the twentieth century. His subsequent entry into the fields of Hebrew-language journalism and literary criticism gradually added to his reputation: a writer and thinker who, in his own small sub-world, could not be ignored. And his death – he was killed while still a relatively young man during the Arab riots in Jaffa in 1921 – provided him with a unique place in the collective memory of the Yishuv (the Jewish community in Mandatory Palestine). The sense of the tragic that pervades almost everything which he wrote was then, as it were, sealed forever: retroactively sacralized by his violent end in the looming conflict between Jews and Arabs in the land claimed by both peoples.

It is in no way surprising, therefore, that Brenner’s life and writings have been the object of sustained attention ever since his murder. In this respect, pride of place has to go to Yitzhak Bakon whose two-volume biography and other studies of Brenner in his early years represents a work of meticulous research and an invaluable source for all subsequent

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scholarship.¹ To gain a true impression of the canonic status enjoyed by Brenner, though, it is enough to mention that the list of those who have published significant articles or books about him includes among many others, Alexander Siskind Rabinovich (AzaR), Yaakov Fichman, Dov Sadan, Baruch Kurzweil, Dan Miron, Natan Zach, Gershon Shaked, Menchem Brinker and Hamutal Bar-Yosef.²

However, in this scholarly output the emphasis has for the most part been placed on the literary aspects of Brenner's life and letters (Yitzhak Bakon being a partial exception). Here, by contrast, an attempt will be made to reexamine Brenner's ideological positions and party commitments within the context of the politics reigning on the "Jewish street" during what can loosely be called the period of the 1905 revolution. A study of this kind warrants a full-length monograph, while all that is attempted in this article is to try to distinguish in broad outline the atypical from the typical and representative in his thinking. Such an approach will, it can be hoped, carry discussion of Brenner as both observer, commentator and activist somewhat further into areas mapped out by Bakon primarily from a literary viewpoint.

For a wide variety of reasons, Brenner did not lay down a clearly delineated ideological trail during the decade that preceded his emigration to Palestine in 1909. Among the factors at work here was his sheer absence from the Russian-Jewish heartlands. Brenner's attention in this period remained steadily focused on developments within the Pale of Settlement and Congress Poland, but he was not physically present in

¹ Yitzhak Bakon, *Brener haẓa'ir: ḥayav viyezivotav shel Brener 'ad lehofa' at "hame'orer" belondon*, 2 vols. (Tel Aviv: 1975); and his *Brener belondon: tekufat "hame'orer" (1905–1907)* (Tel Aviv: 1990). On Brenner's life and political development up until 1908, see, too, Y. Ya'ari-Poleskin, *Mihayei Yosef Ḥayim Brener* (Tel Aviv: 1922), pp. 1–97; M.B. Hillel-HaCohen, "Yosef Ḥayim Brener," *Hashiloah*, vol. 39 (1921), particularly pp. 356–360; H. Zeitlin, "Y.H. Brener: 'arakhim vezikhronot," *Hatekufah* (1922), pp. 617–645 and (a brief elegiac overview): A.Z. Rabinovich, *Yosef Hayim Brener: hayav utkhunato haishit vehasifrutit* (Jaffa: 1922).

² On Brenner as writer and literary critic, see, for example: M. Brinker, *'Ad hasimtah bat-everiyani: maamar 'al sipur umahshavah biyezirat Brener* (Tel Aviv: 1990); Yosef Even, *Omanut hasipur shel Y.H. Brener* (Jerusalem: 1977); Ada Zemach, *Tenu'ah banekudah: Brener vesipurav* (Tel Aviv: 1984); Hamutal Bar-Yosef, *Maga'im shel dekadens: Bialik, Berdichevski, Brener* (Jerusalem: 1997). Articles by Fichman, Sadan, Kurzweil, Miron, Zach, Shaked and many others have been collected in Y. Bakon (ed.), *Yosef Ḥayim Brener: miḥbar maamarim 'al yezirato hasipurit* (Tel Aviv: 1972). (See, too: Ariel Hirschfeld, "Hasemel biyezirato shel Y.H. Brenner," PhD dissertation, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1950.)

that region for most of the time involved. From November 1901 to January 1904, as a recruit in the tsarist army, he was stationed deep inside Russia, in the town of Orel. Following his flight from the army and his subsequent escape from the tsarist police, he ended up by April 1904 in London where he remained until his move to Lemberg (Lvov/Lwow/Lviv) in 1908. As he himself sometimes explicitly stated, he was reluctant to take an unambiguous stand on issues which he could not evaluate at first hand.³

More significant than geography in this respect was psychology. Brenner at times clearly felt that he was duty-bound to commit himself, his energy and his pen to a given political ideology or party, but such commitments clashed with his pronouncedly individualistic and skeptical temperament. His natural inclination was, on the contrary, to fall back on his role as a critical, independent, complex – and hence unpredictable – observer of Russian-Jewish politics.

This meant that he was more at home writing fiction and literary criticism than political journalism. As a novelist and short-story writer, he did not have to align himself unreservedly with any clear-cut ideological credo. Indeed, by the time that he – then twenty years old – came to write his first novel in 1901, *Bahoref* (“In the Winter”) he was already developing his characteristically dialogic form of narrative. This literary device permitted him to present contradictory viewpoints, without his necessarily having to declare a clear-cut stand of his own.

He explicitly shunned the thought that his creative impulse might be directed towards crudely propagandistic ends. The following dialogue from his second full-length novel *Misaviv lanekudah* (“Circling the Point”) touches the issue of party-mindedness in the writer. Asked by Hava Blumin, a young Jewish, but Russified, revolutionary about the contents of a short story which he had written, Yaakov Abramzon, a writer and the main protagonist of the novel, replies:

“What’s the story about? . . . It isn’t about anything. Our modern [Hebrew] literature is still in search of a theme. That’s to say, the story’s about a young Jewish woman. No! a woman who was born Jewish, but was working alongside Russians, [– revolutionaries, – J.F.] in the ’70s. And then after the pogroms . . . of the 80s . . .”

³ Yosef Hayim Brenner, “Rishmei sha’ah,” *Ketavim*, vol. 3 (Tel Aviv: 1985), p. 58; first published in *Hazofeh*, no. 680 (April 4/17, 1905). (E.g.: “We, the wandering exiles, only hear echoes resounding from the events, and we do not see the picture as it is.”)

"Became a Zionist?" interrupted Blumin contemptuously, and as though chagrined, "I knew it, I knew it. . . ."

Abramzon was mortified: "No, the young narrator is really gifted, and has a good grasp of things. He would never commit a sin like that. . . . That woman did not become a Zionist. . . . There is no tendentiousness in this small story. It's simple; it deals with her feelings. But to tell the truth, real life has not provided us with the material needed to describe such feelings. To their shame, or to our shame, and it's tragic, those young women and young men did not have *those* kinds of feelings. . . . But what's described here isn't the way it really was, but how it ought to have been."⁴

As is so often the case with Brenner's fiction, the reader is left with no choice but to peel off layers of (apparently contradictory) meaning in order to reach the author's probable intent. Thus, at one – the most intimate – level, we are simply made witness here to the contortions of a young man notoriously awkward in such encounters with the opposite sex, trying desperately to impress a beautiful and intelligent young woman who happens to belong to a different cultural and political milieu. To some extent Abramzon here is clearly modeled on Brenner himself, (just as Hava Blumin had a real-life equivalent, Haya Volfson), although the degree of overlap between fact and fiction, here as frequently elsewhere, cannot be fully ascertained.

And then again, at another level entirely, what does Abramzon mean when he states his goal, or that of his fictional author, to be the description not of "what was, but of what ought to have been"? On the face of it, this seems to be an affirmation of that very tendentiousness which he had repudiated so vehemently a mere moment before. But in all probability he is, rather, making a declaration of faith in literature not as a

⁴ "Misaviv lanekudah," *Ketavim*, vol. 1 (Tel Aviv: 1978), pp. 471–72; first published in *Hashiloah*, vol. 14 (1904), pp. 410–11. In that text, this dialogue is broken up by the following authorial comment:

The Zionism of Abramzon, as of the story's narrator and of all their kind, did not stem only from the Jewish problem, [from persecution and exclusion]. Even if the Jewish people were at long last to find itself fully accepted in the lands of the dispersion, even then – or rather only then – would they feel the true necessity of Zionism. True, the optimists are wrong, or so it seems, to sense firm ground under their feet. Abramzon, and those who share his views, see things differently from the optimists, but actually high hopes would do nothing to raise their depressed spirits. For them, for Abramzon and those like-minded, there can be nothing more terrible than the idea that the Jews would not be redeemed, that their days would not be renewed, that they would not gain their rights – or alternatively, that winning their rights they would simply melt away among the host nations, disappearing without a trace.

mere reflection of reality, but rather as the essence distilled from life at a given time and place – and hence as the most authentic expression of the national existence. Or as Menahem Brinker puts it:

Brenner not only had the natural desire of a novelist to provide his readers with a narrative that would be of interest and holding; [he was also moved by the belief] that his works of fiction would give voice to the pressing issues of concern to his generation. In this respect, he was clearly heir to the tradition characteristic of both the literatures – the Hebrew and the Russian – on which for the most part he had been reared . . . In the former, the Hebrew tradition, the writer – especially one known to speak for the younger generation – was [widely] regarded as somebody of great moral stature, as a sharp-eyed observer of Jewish life, as a guide to the perplexed.⁵

Brinker argues convincingly that Brenner's transition from the literature of direct social protest characteristic of his early short stories to the less overtly engagé form of his subsequent fiction is largely to be explained by the replacement in his eyes of Dmitrii Pisarev by Vissarion Belinsky as a dominant critical authority.⁶ In the wake of Schelling, Belinsky maintained that a writer (and he, of course, saw supreme examples in *Evgenii Onegin* and *Dead Souls*) could exert great influence by, to quote Francis Randall, "grasping his nation's condition and making its reading public realize it, thereby pushing, moving, transforming and shaping that nation anew."⁷

Randall remarks perceptively that here was a viewpoint which involved Belinsky in the "simultaneous championing of two contrasting literary ideals: the social purpose of literature and the autonomy of art."⁸ This is an insight no less applicable to Brenner as writer and critic.

Of Brenner's fiction, it can be said that he chose to paint on a very small canvas. But even that would be misleading, because, apart from describing in some detail the features and general appearance of his characters, he shunned the visual dimension of things. Historians of the period cannot turn to Brenner for the vivid descriptions of the public space – the meetings, the strikes, the *birzhe*, the angry confrontations in the synagogues and *boteimidroshim*, the outbursts of violence in the name of class war on the Jewish street, the self-defense groups out on patrol, the demonstrations – that he can find in the contemporary novellas

⁵ Brinker, *Ad basimtah hateveryanit*, p. 20. ⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 17–20.

⁷ Francis B. Randall, *Vissarion Belinskii* (Newtonville: 1987), p. 39.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

and novels of An-sky, Kabak, Sholem Aleichem, Weissenberg and Spektor.⁹

As against that, though, Brenner does permit the reader to eavesdrop, to overhear the intense conversations conducted by his characters: dialogues (as in the above passage), monologues or, at times, many-sided exchanges. Coming together in small rooms, often in the midst of the long Russian winter, the protagonists interact in persistently claustrophobic settings. And these confined spaces can be seen as symbolizing Brenner’s conception of the Jewish people in Eastern Europe and in the emigrations: a people enclosed and self-enclosed in a metaphorical ghetto, dark and airless.

What Brenner chose to forfeit in breadth, he compensated for in depth. Nobody else surely recorded with such intensity, with such obsessive concentration, the search of the *polu-intelligentsia* (the “half-intelligentsia”) – that section of the radicalized youth who had some formal Jewish education, but otherwise were autodidacts, denied access to the *gimnaziia* and the university, uprooted and penurious – for some meaning to life in general, and to Jewish life, in particular. And within the half-intelligentsia his focus was primarily on his own specific and minute milieu: the ex-yeshiva students, with their first-class knowledge of Hebrew, of Aramaic, of rabbinic texts and of Yiddish, their mother-tongue, but with only a late-acquired and patchy grasp of Russian (or Polish) and of the corpus of secular learning provided to their peers in the modern institutions of learning.¹⁰ Although, included among the characters in his fiction were *gimnazisty*, *eksterny* and members of the artisan (working-class) intelligentsia, center-stage was normally reserved for the

⁹ See, e.g.: S. An-sky, “V novom rusle (povest),” *Novye veianiia: pervyi evreiskii sbornik* (Moscow: 1907), pp. 88–286; for the shorter Yiddish version: “In shtrom: erts lung fur der yidisher revolutionärer bavegung,” *Der fraynd* (January, 3/16, 1907 and in later installments); A.A. Kabak, *Daniel Shafranov* (Warsaw: 1912); Sholem Aleichem, “Der mabl,” *Di varhayt*, no. 437 (March 30, 1907, and in later installments); Y.M. Weissenberg, “A shtetl” (supplement to *Der veg*, apparently attached to the issue of January 14/27, 1907); M. Spektor, “Avrom Zilbertsvayg,” *Der fraynd*, no. 6 (January 8/29, 1907 and in later installments). On the response to the 1905 revolution in the Yiddish-language literature, see the excellent book by Mikhail Krutikov, *Yiddish Fiction and the Crisis of Modernity* (Stanford: 2000). (Cf. my article: “Youth in Revolt: An-sky’s ‘In shtrom’ and the Instant Fictionalization of 1905,” in the forthcoming book on An-sky edited by Gabriella Safran and Steven J. Zipperstein [Chapter 4 of the present volume]).

¹⁰ For a useful glimpse into the milieu of the “half intelligentsia,” see, e.g.: A. Litvak (C.Y. Helfand), *Vos geven: etyudn un zikhroynes* (Warsaw: 1926) and A. Lesin (Valt), *Zikhront vehavayot* (Tel Aviv: 1943); this latter volume, a selection of articles translated from their Yiddish original, was edited and introduced by Berl Katznelson, himself a *polu-intelligent*. (It is Litvak’s use of the term, “half-intelligentsia,” that is accepted here.)

polu-intelligentsiia, very often none other than some fictional version of Brenner himself, his friends, and his circle of acquaintances.

Furthermore, he not only wrote about that which he knew at first hand and intimately, he also insisted with his decision to publish almost exclusively in Hebrew on addressing himself to that same small circle of his own kind. Most Russian Jews could not cope with the language, and of those who could, the majority were traditional, Orthodox, and unwilling to read the work of the rebels, the *apikorsim*.

However, even though Brenner thus prided himself on his individuality and, indeed, on his eccentricity, he followed a path of intellectual – and political – development that was in many ways typical of that taken by significant sections of the Russian-Jewish intelligentsia. Or, to put it more specifically, he too, like so many of his generation, found himself pushed and pulled between the ideologies and parties that from the turn of the century combined socialism and Jewish nationalism in ever-changing permutations.

Brenner's teen-age years were marked by the same fearful encounters with forbidden Haskalah literature; the same hesitations and concealments; the same punishments meted out by the rabbinical authorities; and the same peripatetic and poverty-stricken wanderings that were the lot of so many of his contemporaries in the world of the yeshiva, the *bes medresh* and the *kloyz* in, the 1890s. But more is known about the details of his inner life – the twists and turns that punctuated his painful transition from childhood to young manhood – than perhaps about those of anybody else in his generation and milieu. His penchant for writing, be it letters, poetry, articles or fiction, emerged extremely early; and while much of that teen-age output has been lost, what remains enables us to follow closely the way in which he chose to describe the gradual alienation, experienced by himself and (or) by others in his peer group,¹¹ from the moral authority of the established order.

In *Bahoref*, the father of the boy about to leave his hometown for the first time, on his way to a yeshiva, is warned by a friend that the result could be disastrous:

“You know, . . . I myself read *Hamelits* . . . but the truth has to be told: Terrible breakaways [*shkotsim*] have come out of Volozhin”.

“Not my Yirmiya,” answered my father, confidently, almost in anger.¹²

¹¹ Of particular importance for our knowledge of Brenner in his teens are his letters of 1897–98 to Uri Nisan Gnessin: *Igerot Y.Ḥ. Brenner*, ed. M. Poznansky (Tel Aviv: 1941), pp. 4–41.

¹² “Bahoref,” *Ketavim*, vol. 1, p. 137; first published in *Hashiloah*, vol. 11 (1903), p. 313.

But in the novel, just as in the life, the attraction of the banned books and *bikblekh* read in secret, anything that came to hand – Mapu, Shomer, Smolenskin – proved irresistible. More subversive still, in the Pochev yeshiva, Brenner (together with the young Uri Nisan Gnessin, the son of the yeshiva's head, a highly venerated rabbinic scholar) went from reading to writing. The clandestine journal which they brought out for the benefit of a few friends was (at least according to the fictionalized account in *Bahoref*), made up of

various disputes between the Torah and the Haskalah, the poor and the rich, the yeshivot and the sons of the well-to-do [*bnei baalei habatim*], faith and criticism [*bakirah*], Hasidim and Mitnagdim, nationalists and assimilationists. These latter two terms we picked up wholesale from the newspapers without our having any clear idea of what they meant.¹³

The flight from the yeshivot, and all that they represented, took on epidemic proportions in the quarter of a century that preceded the First World War. But from Brenner, as from Feierberg and Berdyczewski, we can learn just how tortured a process was often involved.¹⁴

Pulling the Talmud students back to the entrenched way of life were powerful forces. Many (and Brenner was surely among them) were strongly drawn to the ideal of the rabbi as ascetic, as the embodiment of a pure spirituality – be it in the image (as he put it in his short story, *Mizvah*) of

those great souls who subject themselves to every form of asceticism, shut away day and night as they dedicate themselves to destroying the husks [*kelipot*], . . . or [in that of] those holy men who, concealing their true identity, work away at the simplest, most menial labor by day, only to have Elijah the Prophet and our Sages revealed to them at night.¹⁵

¹³ "Bahoref," *Ketavim*, vol. 1, p. 144; *Hashiloah*, vol. 11 (1903), p. 410. The name of the fictional journal described in *Bahoref* was *Hamaor hakatan* ("The Small Light"), while in the Pochev yeshiva, the real-life journal was called *Haperah* ("The Flower"); another of its journals was *Hakof* ("The Monkey") (cf. Bakon, *Brener haẓ'air*, vol. 1, pp. 23–25).

¹⁴ See e.g.: M.Z. Feierberg, "Lean?" *Hashiloah*, vol. 5 (1899) and M.Y. Berdyczewski, *Mibait umiḥutz: temunot veziyurim* (Petrokov: 1899). Ada Zemach notes that the process of rebellion by the yeshiva youth against the traditional world had found frequent expression in Hebrew literature long before Brenner described it in his first novel. But she argues that *Bahoref* is nonetheless, "the first modern novel within the most innovative Hebrew prose." What marks off its anti-hero from earlier fictional models was his realization of "the terrible truth that the life he was living was no life at all. 'That he had no present and no future', 'only one thing remained: the past'." *Tenu'ah banekudah*, pp. 98–99.

¹⁵ "Mizvah (zikaron)," *Ketavim*, vol. 1, p. 38; first published in the collection of Brenner's short stories, *Mi'emek akhor: ziyurim ureshimot* (Warsaw: 1900), p. 28.

But there were also far more mundane pressures. Was not a brilliant student of the Talmud all but guaranteed a large dowry and security in his future life? (“Famous merchants,” Yirmiya is told by his infuriated father in *Bahoref*, “well-known doctors, leading lawyers, wealthy and powerful men – men, not idle beggars like you – all chase after a dowry: of course, a dowry suited to their standing, ten thousand rubles, twenty, fifty, a hundred thousand, but a dowry.”)¹⁶

As against that, though, there was the corrosive loss of faith. In a remarkable passage in one of his earliest short stories, “*Briyah ‘aluvah*” (“A Miserable Being”), Brenner describes a young man who dedicates himself unreservedly to a totally spiritual life, only in the end to be left without answers to “the most profound questions.” He was as willing as anybody to play his part in retrieving the holy sparks, the *nitsotsot*, from the *kelipot* and raising them up to the *Ein-Sof* – but “if the whole point is a return to the source, then what is the creation of the world all about?”¹⁷

In this story, the disillusioned enthusiast is forced to divorce his (wealthy) wife, denounced as mad, driven from his hometown and left to wander friendless from pillar to post. Brenner, the young subversive, also at times found himself declared “mad,”¹⁸ but losing belief in a God-centered world and in the binding power of the rabbinic texts, he turned for salvation to all the other books that he could lay his hands on, whether fact or fiction, history or philosophy, in Hebrew, Yiddish or Russian (which he began to learn laboriously from his mid-teens). “All that I want” says Yirmiya at one point in *Bahoref*, “is to be somebody whole, to know about the world, about life, about mankind and about myself.”¹⁹

To read whatever he wanted, to write, endlessly, to learn a trade (for a time Brenner worked at becoming a scribe) all this provided compensation for what he had chosen to forfeit. Or in Yirmiya’s words:

I truly rejoiced in the religious shackles lifted from my soul, in the liberty that was now mine, in the yoke thrown off. To behave with complete freedom, no longer to believe in nonsense – for me that provided a positive and satisfying faith. The emptiness that this negation produced had still not revealed itself in all its terror.²⁰

¹⁶ *Ketavim*, vol. 1, p. 223; *Hashiloah*, vol. 12 (1903), p. 333.

¹⁷ “*Beriyah ‘aluvah (reshimah)*” *Ketavim*, vol. 1, p. 86; *Mi’emek akhor*, p. 73. (In the collected works, this story is entitled “*Nedudim*” [“Wanderings”].)

¹⁸ Brenner to U.N. Gnessin, winter 1897–98, *Igerot Y.H. Brenner*, pp. 20–21 (“All the lads in the *kloyz* regarded me as mad. . . . All he does is write day and night. . . . And he gets his free meals. . . . For what? He hardly studies. . . . Have you ever seen anybody as mad?”)

¹⁹ *Ketavim*, vol. 1, p. 165; *Hashiloah*, vol. 11 (1903), p. 518.

²⁰ “*Bahoref*,” *Ketavim*, vol. 1, p. 156; *Hashiloah*, vol. 11 (1903), p. 518.

Another window onto forbidden territory was opened by politics. While still embedded in the old order, Brenner identified himself with *Hibat Zion* (the Palestinophile organization founded in 1884) and, after 1897, with the Zionist movement. (Yirmi'a's father was horrified to find him in possession of Ahad Ha'am's famous collection of articles *Al parashat drakhim* ["At the Crossroads"].)²¹ And once he had broken away entirely from the traditional way of life, casting off the *kapote*, the long black coat that he had continued to wear into his late teens, he moved into the orbit of the Jewish revolutionary and Marxist party, the Bund.

Relatively little is known about Brenner's period of working for the Bund, but what evidence there is suggests that it extended from late 1899 until his recruitment into the army two years later. During this time he served briefly as an editor of the party's clandestine journal in Homel, *Der kampf*, even recruiting to the journal – and to the party – one of its most famous future leaders, Borekh Mordkhe Virgily Cohen (also a *polu-intelligent*).²² A short piece in *Der kampf* has been clearly identified as penned by Brenner. Entitled "No, and a Thousand Times No," it took the form of an agitational speech by a revolutionary worker to his fellow workers. (The uncomplicated and single-minded tenor of the piece made itself felt in the opening sentences: "No brothers; I say no! Things have to be different, different! We have to understand once and for all that we are not animals, that we are human beings, people with souls, people who with all their heart . . . have to want to be free, to be rid of their bridle, and of their yoke. We must not forget that everything produced is made by us, with our work and our sweat".)²³ During the course of 1901, Brenner was for much of the time in Belostok which then housed the Bundist

²¹ "Bahoref," *Ketavim*, vol. 1, p. 150; *Hashiloah*, vol. 11 (1903), p. 414.

²² Mordkhe Cohen (Virgily was a pseudonym), unlike Brenner, came from a prosperous family, but he too received his formal education in the heder and yeshivah. On Brenner's role in bringing him into the Bund, see M. Gintsburg, "An ovent mit Virgilin," in *B. Kohen-Virgili: zamlbukh tsu zayn biografiye un kharakteristik* (Vilna: 1938), pp. 54–66. For his biography in outline: "Hoyptdates fun B. Kohen's lebn," *B. Kohen-Virgili*, pp. 10–17. (Even though the facts are not directly relevant to the theme of this article it might be of interest to note here that Virgily-Cohen was the nephew of a prominent Hebrew writer and Hovev-Zion, Mordechai Ben-Hillel Ha-Cohen; the father of Arkadius Kahan, a professor at the University of Chicago who specialized in the economic history of Russia and Russian Jewry; and the uncle of Yitzhak Rabin, twice prime minister of Israel.)

²³ "Neyn un toyzent mal neyn (ertseylung un erklerung fun a balmelokhe)," in Brenner, *Haketavim hayidiim: Di yidishe shriftn*, ed. Y. Bakon (Beersheva: 1985), p. 57; first published in *Der kampf*, no. 3 (March 1901).

central committee as well as its main journal, *Di arbeter shtime*, and there are good grounds for the assumption that he was heavily involved in the Yiddish language publishing activities of the party.

In his biography, Yitzhak Bakon describes Brenner's ideological evolution in the years 1899–1901 as moving “from Ahad Ha'amism to Bundism.”²⁴ According to this scheme of things, one political credo (strictly nationalist) was displaced by the other (revolutionary Marxism on the “Jewish street”). But, arguably, the configuration of politics at that particular time was less cut-and-dried than Bakon suggests. True, since the First Zionist Congress of 1897, Ahad Ha'am himself had been putting forward a biting critique of Herzl, his style of leadership, his concept of nationalism and his political strategies. But the Democratic Faction (led by Leo Motzkin and Chaim Weizmann), which supported many of Ahad Ha'am's ideas, did not form itself until 1901 and even then sought to reach an accommodation with Herzl, not to displace him.

The situation in the Bund was equally inchoate. Only at its Fourth Congress, held in Belostok in 1901, did it first adopt in principle the idea of Jewish national – Diaspora – autonomy, but nonetheless the organization (still at the time a subsection of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party) refrained from including that idea in its official program for fear, it was stated, of clouding the class-consciousness of the Jewish proletariat. Not until late in 1905 did cultural national autonomy take its place among the formal demands put forward by the Bund as part of its so-called minimal program. The fact is that “Bundism,” as it would later become – a synthesis of revolutionary Marxism, internationalism, Diaspora autonomism and Yiddishism – was then still in its early stages of crystallization, and many of its leaders strongly opposed the national turn advocated, inter alia, by Vladimir Kossovsky, John Mill, and Mark Liber. It was presumably to dispel any suspicion of a nationalist deviation that the Fourth Congress adopted a resolution which for the first time specifically excluded all Zionists from the ranks of the Bund.²⁵

The existing evidence strongly suggests that the young Brenner (he did not reach the age of twenty until 1901) was very much part of this broader

²⁴ Bakon, *Brener haz'air*, vol. 1, pp. 58–91.

²⁵ For lengthy extracts translated into English from the resolutions adopted by the Bund at its Fourth Congress: P. Mendes-Flohr and J. Reinharz (eds.), *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History* (New York: 1995), pp. 420–21; for the full text: “Der ferter kongres fun algemaynem yidishn arbeter bund in rusland un poyln,” *Der yidisher arbeter*, no. 12 (1901), pp. 99–100.

phenomenon of ideological ferment. He personally found it impossible to confine himself within a neatly defined set of political beliefs, even though he saw that a clear party line and strict party discipline had much logic on their side. In the following obviously, although not explicitly, autobiographical fragment, Brenner in 1912 looked back to those days and to the tensions inherent in his position. He referred to

a committed Hebrew writer whose first creative output predated 1900...; that is the period of the Bund in its heyday, when a spirit of nothing less than holiness reigned among its members of whom he too was one.²⁶ ... He was then involved in producing proclamations [for the party] in Yiddish and stories drawn from the life of the poverty stricken masses in Hebrew. His writing in Hebrew caused him to feel embarrassment and to develop a “guilty conscience” vis-à-vis his fellow party members.²⁷

Be that as it might, Brenner continued to write and publish in Hebrew even in this – his Bundist – period. Indeed, the short stories with their strong note of social protest that Brenner mentioned in his reminiscence of 1912 were collected and published as a book, *Baemek akhor* (“In the Valley of Trouble”), in Warsaw in 1901. Similarly, it was at this same time that he was writing his first novel (also, of course, in Hebrew), *Bahoref*.

The original manuscript of this work, held in the Kotik publishing house in Belostok, was destroyed by fire in 1902 when Brenner was already serving as a recruit in the army, but he found the strength to rewrite it during that same year. It was brought out in installments during 1903 by *Hashiloah*, the Hebrew monthly founded by Ahad Ha’am and edited at that time by Joseph Klausner.

Reflected in the novel was that same indeterminacy, that same inner conflict, which Brenner briefly described in his retrospective comment of 1912. The duality, as has often been noted, was even proclaimed in the

²⁶ A very similar comment appears in Brenner’s novella of 1907, *Min hameizur* (“From the Narrows”) where it is said of Avraham Menuhim, the story’s heroic protagonist, that “for years he was a loyal member of the Bund in Lithuania – at the time when that organization was imbued with the holy spirit!” *Ketavim*, vol. 2, p. 1047; *Ha’olam* no. 3 (20 January/2 February 1909), p. 7.

²⁷ “Rishmei sifrut,” *Ketavim*, vol. 3, p. 749; first published in *Heahdut*, no. 19 (28 Shevat 5672/February 16, 1912), p. 9. (Of Brenner’s period in Homel, Hillel Zeitlin, who was then a very close friend, later recalled: “At the time when we first met he was an active Zionist [*ziyoni ’askan*]; and a few months later an active Bundist [*bundai ’askan*] but between us we never talked about either Zionism or Bundism” (Zeitlin, “Yosef Hayim Brenner,” *Hatekufah*, [1922], p. 626). What did concern them were philosophical issues (Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Tolstoy), on the one hand, and the Jewish question and its possible solutions, on the other.

names given to two of the key protagonists: Feierman, the would-be but highly skeptical Zionist, and Haimovich, the committed revolutionary Marxist. Both names overlapped that of the novelist: the former being more or less synonymous with Brenner; and the latter enveloping his middle name.²⁸

Even as he gropes for some firm faith, Feierman is plagued by doubt. At one time, he decides that he is to be a disciple of Lev Tolstoy, to become a simple artisan and to identify himself with mankind as a whole:

It would happen that I found myself strongly drawn to the spirit of “universalism”; to a vantage-point, as it were, high above all the concerns of nations, languages and states, and then I would see nothing but the drama of ordinary men – and no longer that of a particular people caught up in its own specific situation.²⁹

But such moments of escape did not last and Feierman would return to his

thoughts about “the sons who have deserted their father’s table”; about the great and strange historical tragedy of an ancient people that has been dying for two thousand years; that burns but is not consumed; . . . about its fine young men rotting away in cellars or deserting it for other worlds and forgetting its very existence; about the contempt and the poverty that the entire world heaps onto this bent-over but proud people; about its awakening to life and its chance for salvation, for redemption; about its literature and its thinking which are so explosive and yet so utterly ethereal. . . . But, of course, random thoughts could not lead me to . . . Zionism in the usual and obvious sense. Whatever I undertook in the way of Zionist work at the time was limited and eccentric partly because I lack the attributes of a social activist, partly because of my inclination to keep apart, to observe from the side, to analyze, and partly because my ideas about the Jews and Jewry were so extremely skeptical.³⁰

While Feierman thus emerges as the embodiment of ineffectuality, condemned to flounder between competing faiths (and, very much in character, to fail in his advances to the woman who attracts him desperately), Haimovich stands psychologically at the opposite pole or, as Feierman, the narrator in the novel, puts it:

²⁸ For a discussion of Feierman and Haimovich as two sides of a “split personality,” see Bakon, *Brener ha’z’air*, vol. 2, pp. 333–37.

²⁹ *Ketavim*, vol. 1, p. 176; *Hashiloah*, vol. 12 (1903), p. 18. According to Hillel Zeitlin, their group in Homel (with Brenner to the fore) briefly toyed with the idea in early 1901 that, in accordance with Tolstoy’s principles, they should found an agricultural cooperative somewhere in America (Hillel Zeitlin, “Y.H. Brener: ‘arakhim vezikhronot,” *Hatekufah* [1922], pp. 633–37).

³⁰ *Ketavim*, vol. 1, p. 176; *Hashiloah*, vol. 12 (1903), p. 18.

For Haimovich everything is crystal clear. The two terms – the “bourgeoisie” and the “proletariat” – consume him completely. All the issues of life are subsumed for him under the single question of labor and property; or, to be more exact, for him there is simply no other issue in life at all. . . . I, unfortunately, cannot explain everything to myself in this way. True, there have been moments in my life when I too became totally caught up by this universal question and, dragged along by the Haimoviches, saw in it and in its solution the be-all and end-all: the fight for justice, for a powerful ideal, for putting the world aright [*tikun ’olam*]. . . . But alongside the enthusiast in me there was also the critic and the analyst – and they filled me with heretical doubts, revealing to me much that was Quixotic, confused, populist, ugly, ridiculous, superficial [in the outlook of the Haimovitches].³¹

In *Bahoref*, Brenner creates a balance between these two friends; and he allows Haimovich to put the case against Feierman’s tentative Zionism with devastating cogency:

Zionism! I’m not even talking about its being utopian, although it is a sheer utopia, especially given the political situation in Europe and Asia. . . . And apart from your Zionism being reactionary, totally reactionary, a real regression, and generally a joke . . . who are the Zionists? A few yeshiva students and a few members of the bourgeoisie [*baalei batim*]! . . . Alright, let’s grant, as you say, that Zionism doesn’t require us to go to synagogue every day and bow down to the rabbi and to the high-and-mighty – nor to beat a retreat to Asia; and let’s assume that Zionism doesn’t necessarily have to stand in the way of other essential undertakings. . . . Let’s even grant that there could be a miracle and that reality changes, then I ask you: how would this bourgeois idea do anything to improve the situation of our proletariat? . . . You yourself have told me about the situation of the colonists in the “Holy Land” working under the control of Rothschild. And you are still bemoaning the [need to recruit] “our young forces.” . . . Zionism will never win over to its side those young people who are dedicated to ideals.³²

For all the unsparing criticism and ironic tone that Feierman adopts towards Haimovich, he nonetheless envies him his unwavering sense of certitude and political commitment. At one point in the novel, for example, he notes the contrast between attempts to organize some singing among his non-affiliated and philosophically skeptical friends with similar efforts among the revolutionaries, the party members. In the former setting, “everybody would begin to sing on his own, hardly breaking the silence, songs about the emotions and about despair, and soon enough the voices would grow weaker until they died out altogether.” And then

³¹ *Ketavim*, vol. 1, pp. 178–79; *Hashiloah*, vol. 12 (1903), p. 19.

³² *Ketavim*, vol. 1, p. 177–78; *Hashiloah*, vol. 12 (1903), p. 19.

they turned to drinking. But at Haimovich's, "when they try to sing, it works out well. There they sing in unison 'On the Banks of the Volga' and songs about the prowess of Stenka Razin and so on."³³

The climactic scene of the novel is reached when Feierman finds himself enraged by a self-satisfied and socially established young man, Borsiv, who dismisses the fact that Haimovich has recently become a factory worker as nothing more than a gesture designed "to show off his originality . . . to show that he is not one to follow the beaten path. . . . I'm sure that his factory work won't last long."³⁴ Mortified for his friend and for himself – Borsiv is having success with the woman whom he secretly loves – Feierman spits in Borsiv's face. (And we soon learn that Haimovich has, indeed, left the factory.)

The Brenner who escaped from Russia in mid-1904 turned out to be far more decisive in terms of political advocacy than he had been up until 1901. And this was the case not only in his journalism, but also in his works of fiction. In broad terms, the ideological positions that he adopted over the next four years followed mainstream developments within the radical wing of the Russian Zionist movement. But within that context, his voice sounded its own distinctive note. Much that Brenner wrote was biting critical of major trends within his own camp.

Whether in the army or whether in London, Brenner (as already noted) had to observe from outside the succession of events that exerted a dramatic impact on the life and politics in the Pale of Settlement and Congress Poland during the period 1903–1907: the Kishinev pogrom of 1903; the Uganda crisis at the Sixth Zionist Congress in that same year; Herzl's death in 1904 and the territorialist schism following the Seventh Zionist Congress in 1905; the unfolding revolution across Russia; the large-scale participation of the Jewish youth in that revolution; the October Manifesto and the October pogroms; the elections to the First and Second Dumas in 1906–7; and the final defeat of the revolution with the electoral law of 3 June 1907. Nonetheless, he closely followed the rapidly evolving situation and made his viewpoint known whenever the opportunity arose.

Until the pogroms of October 1905, Brenner was committed to the faction within the Zionist movement, usually known as the *Zionei-Zion*, which demanded unwavering loyalty to Palestine/Eretz Yisrael as the

³³ *Ketavim*, vol. 1, p. 200; *Hashiloah*, vol. 12 (1903), p. 123.

³⁴ *Ketavim*, vol. 1, p. 253; *Hashiloah*, vol. 12 (1903), p. 394.

only possible national homeland for the Jewish people and so rejected outright the search for any more accessible region. From late 1904, and throughout most of 1905, Brenner was a key figure, together with Kalman Marmor, in organizing what was – in ideological terms – an affiliate of the Zionei-Zion faction: the Poale Zion movement in England.³⁵ And the line of thought that he then advocated was broadly consistent with the position taken at the time by the Poale Zion in Minsk led by Yitzhak Berger as also by Ber Borokhov in his articles of 1905 in the journal *Evreiskaia zhizn*.³⁶

What he and those like-minded had aimed at, Brenner wrote retrospectively from late in the year, was

not Zionism as philanthropy; not Zionism on some plot of land anywhere under the sun to be reserved for emigrants; not some dubious corner set aside for a meager group of the poor from Eastern Europe... but rather – a grand hope – the rebirth of the Jewish nation: the return of the Jews to their own land. Not a state... but a free community [*yishuv hofshi*] – that, [so we argued], is what we need if the Jewish people is to be revived, and that is what can be achieved by such a revival; not Ugandism for those tumbling out of Russia, but Zionism for the Jews of the entire world; no, not the Ingathering of the Exiles, as that term is usually understood, for that is beyond anything feasible,... but [Zionism] as a way to forestall the threat of extinction now facing our people.³⁷

As was the case with Borokhov and Menachem Mendel Ussishkin, the leader of the Zionei Zion in that period, so Brenner advocated a

³⁵ On Brenner and the Poale Zion movement in London, see the memoirs – not entirely accurate, as Yitzhak Bakon has persuasively demonstrated – of Kalman Marmor, who was the leading figure in the group (earlier known as Maaravi). Brenner was provided with lodging space by Marmor in his Whitechapel flat for a few months; and, inter alia, he helped Marmor edit the group's monthly, *Der yidisher frayheyt*. (K. Marmar/Marmor, *Mayn lebensgeshikhte*, vol. 2 [New York: 1959], pp. 707–20). (cf. Bakon, *Brener haẓa'ir*, vol. 1, pp. 174–83). Brenner's allegiance to the Zionei Zion in this period (from 1904 until October 1905) found clear expression in his short sketch, “*Nekhe-ruah: 'alon*,” which – written in ironic tones – was given the form of a monologue spoken by a supporter of the Uganda project. (*Ketavim*, vol. 1, p. 699–701; *Hame'orer*, no. 2 [February 1906], pp. 14–16 [signed: Lo-'aloni]).

³⁶ On the Poale Zion movement in Minsk, see e.g.: M. Zinger [Singer], *Bereishit hatenu'ah basozialistit: perakim udmuyot* (Haifa: 1957). Borochoy's two major articles written in support of the ideology of the Zionei Zion as led by M.M. Ussishkin were “*K voprosam teorii sionizma*” and “*K voprosu o Sione i territorii*.”

³⁷ “*Mikhtav arokh shalah li*,” *Ketavim*, vol. 3, p. 76 (first published in London as a separate pamphlet in late 1905). (The reference to a “free community” as opposed to a state should presumably be seen as evidence of anarchist influence; for an extensive discussion of this theme, see note 57 below.)

strongly voluntarist strategy. Without an avant-garde drawn from within the youth, Zionism was doomed to fail:

To return to Zion, . . . to restore national determination and courage to the Jewish nation, to repair the past, to overcome our fractured history – that can only be undertaken by the best among our youngsters, those who are most at one with themselves, have the greatest sense for the aesthetic, and are the most sensitive.³⁸

With this focus on the formation of a nationalist elite and on settlement in Eretz Yisrael, Brenner might logically have opted to oppose the participation of the Jewish youth in the Russian revolution. That, at least until 1904 or perhaps even later, was the position advocated by the influential Poale Zion group in Minsk. But Brenner thought otherwise; and in this respect his views simply reflected the major trend on the left wing of the Russian Zionist movement.

That the Jewish people in the tsarist empire had to organize self-defense units against pogroms was considered axiomatic across a broad political spectrum, ranging from Ahad Ha'am at one pole to the Bund at the other. And only a small, albeit not inevitable, step was required for an armed underground designed for defense to join the revolutionary offensive against that autocratic regime held responsible (whether wholly or partially) for the pogroms.

In a letter written to a friend from his army base in Orel in April 1903, Brenner had commented laconically on the recent pogroms. "And so there is news out there in the world: Kishinev! If we just stand and yell day and night, we won't achieve much. All our cursing will gradually evaporate away."³⁹ The implicit message was clear: actions, not words were what was needed. And this was the view which Brenner put forward forcefully once he was able to express himself free from the tsarist authorities.

Thus, to recall what was probably the most extreme example, mention can be made of the tiny booklet, entitled *Hu amar lah* ("He Told Her"), which Brenner brought out in London in the summer of 1905, following the recent pogrom in Zhitomir. Any profit to be made from its sales was "to be dedicated to the Jewish self-defense in Russia."⁴⁰ In tone and message, it was reminiscent of Bialik's extraordinarily influential

³⁸ "Mikhtav arokh . . .," vol. 3, p. 77. (The emphasis on the aesthetic sense as a necessary characteristic of the would-be political elite echoes, it would appear, Nietzschean ideas; on Nietzsche's influence on Brenner: Brinker, *Ad hasimtah hateveriyani*, pp. 139–49.)

³⁹ Brenner to Z. Enokhi (April 27, 1903) in *Igerot Y.H. Brenner*, p. 104.

⁴⁰ "Hu amar lah: daf mekut'a mikuntres katan," *Ketavim*, vol. 1, p. 596.

poem of two years earlier, "In the City of Slaughter."⁴¹ Penned as a monologue by a seventeen-year-old Jewish youth whose father, a peddler, had been brutally murdered by the local peasants, it was nothing less than a desperate call to arms not just to defend the Jews but also – and even more – to take revenge against the Ukrainian *pogromshchiki* who were visualized as heirs to Khmelnytsky, Mazepa, and the perpetrators of 1881–1882. (Or, in the words of the lad: "Is this going to help? No? But a nation's whole being rests on its mourning, on its vengeance and on its honor.")⁴²

In depicting the pogroms as the result of myths and mind-sets rooted deep in the collective consciousness of the majority nationality, Brenner anticipated by half a year Dubnov's bitter analysis in his series of articles published in the wake of the October events: "Lessons from the Terrible Days."⁴³ And, paradoxically, he, too, like Dubnov, held the view that, despite all its apparent illogicality there could be no denying the revolutionary imperative. Even though it was doubtful, he wrote in the spring of 1905, whether the revolution would end in victory – the army, after all, had so far not switched sides⁴⁴ – there could be no neutrality in the fight for liberty: "There is no other way. We have to be among the first, in the advanced guard. We have nothing to lose. Worse than it is now it cannot be."⁴⁵ And at the end of the year, despite everything that had occurred in between, he could still write: "In truth, as human beings, do the people of Russia in all their variety have any choice but to fight against the absolutist regime? . . . Whether they are citizens or denied citizenship do they have any option other than to break this monster that devours

⁴¹ Bialik's poem, like Brenner's *Hu amar lah*, was understood as a bitter condemnation of Jewish passivity in the face of violence. The poem was first published under a different name in order to satisfy the censorship: "Masa Nemirov" ("A Tale of Nemirov"), *Hazeman: measef lesifrut ulemad'a*, no. 3 (July–September 1904), pp. 3–15.

⁴² "Hu amar lah," *Ketavim*, vol. 1, pp. 600–601.

⁴³ The article, "Uroki strashnykh dnei," ("Lessons from the Terrible Days") was published in installments in *Voskhod (Nedel'naia khronika)* no. 47–48 (December 1, 1905), pp. 1–10; no. 49–50 (December 16), pp. 1–5. The article has been published in part in English: S. Dubnov, *Nationalism and History: Essays on Old and New Judaism*, edited and introduced by K. S. Pinson (Philadelphia: 1958), pp. 200–214.

⁴⁴ "Rishmei sha'ah," *Ketavim*, vol. 3, p. 62; *Hazofeh*, no. 680 (April 4/17, 1905), p. 2 (E.g. "We hear promises and then we hear those promises being reversed, time and again. And won't the time come when the soldiers, well-trained and well-armed, emerge as one – and together with them all the police, the judges and the guards: all the rats and the fleas who, crawling, sneering, waiting, are hidden away in the sink holes of the revolution and in the cracks of the gendarmerie.")

⁴⁵ Rishmei sha'ah," *Ketavim*, vol. 3, p. 63.

everything, enslaves everybody and bans whatever it can lay its hands on?”⁴⁶

In his biography, Yitzhak Bakon writes that during this, Brenner’s first year in London, he became an active, even a leading member not only of Poale Zion, but also of the émigré branch in the West of the Party of Socialist Revolutionaries (the SRs).⁴⁷ But this assumption is highly questionable. Brenner, as Bakon describes, was indeed recruited by the famous revolutionary veteran, Nikolai Chaikovsky, to translate material extracted from the SR periodical, *Revoliutsionnaia Rossiia*, for reproduction in the Yiddish journal, *Kampf un kempfer*. Under the joint editorship of Brenner and S.A. An-sky, this journal was printed initially in London.⁴⁸ It has to be remembered, however, that at the time, Brenner was searching desperately for ways in which to earn some minimal income in order to keep body and soul together – and he, indeed, received payment for his work from the SRs.⁴⁹

Doubtless, he found it far more appealing to use his skills as Yiddish translator and editor on behalf of the Socialist Revolutionaries, than on behalf of the Social Democrats for whom he also worked for a time out of sheer financial necessity. After all, he shared the voluntarist and ethically-based beliefs advocated by most of the SR ideologists as well as their consequent scorn for the laws of scientific determinism characteristically advocated by the Russian Marxists.⁵⁰

Nevertheless, it is hard to envisage Brenner, if provided the luxury of free choice, as an active member of the Party of Socialist Revolutionaries. That party, after all, saw itself as heir to the narodnik tradition and as primary champion of the peasantry (albeit in alliance with the revolutionary proletariat and intelligentsia). For his part, though, Brenner, time and again, whether in his belletristic or in his journalistic writings, made

⁴⁶ “Mikhtavim lerusiyah,” *Ketavim*, vol. 3, pp. 100–101; *Hame’orer*, no. 1 (January, 1906), p. 8 (there signed Bar Yohai).

⁴⁷ Bakon, *Brener haẓ’air*, vol. 2, pp. 183–197.

⁴⁸ On the cover page of *Kampf un kempfer*, it is stated that the journal was published by the Party of Socialist Revolutionaries and edited by Z. Sinani and Yohanan Hakanai (pseudonyms of An-sky and Brenner respectively). It appears to have been made up entirely of translations.

⁴⁹ Terms of payment for the work of translation are mentioned in specific terms (twenty-five rubles for sixteen printed pages) in a letter from Chaikovsky to Brenner (23 October 1905), see *Brener haẓ’air*, vol. 1, p. 193.

⁵⁰ Bakon emphasizes the fact that Brenner’s flight from the army was facilitated by a group of SRs in Orel and that among them was Haya Volfson. But Bundists were responsible for his rescue from the étape in Bobruisk; and there does not appear to be enough evidence to associate Brenner with membership in either party at this stage of his life (early 1904). On his double escape: *ibid.*, pp. 110–120.

it crystal clear that he saw a yawning gulf dividing the Jewish from the Russian and Ukrainian peoples.

It was not just that, with a few notable exceptions, the Jews were depicted by Brenner as hopelessly puny when compared with their sturdily built, much taller neighbors. Rather, he emphasized the extreme divergence in their outlook, habits and modes of behavior, with both sides drawn in less than flattering colors. Thus, for example, in the novella, broadly based on his army experience, *Shana ahat* ("A Single Year"), the Jewish soldiers are for the most part over-individualistic, unreliable and devious, while their Russian and Ukrainian counterparts tend to be hopelessly stolid, unthinking, eager to drink themselves into the ground, and routinely hostile to the Jews with whom they are living side by side.⁵¹ Even those Russian *intelligenty* who on occasion made an appearance in Brenner's fiction (Grigorii Nikolaevich Petrov in *Misaviv lanekuda*, or Shakhtarov in *Min hameizar* ["From the Narrows"], for example), although revolutionaries cannot overcome their built-in contempt for Jews.⁵²

The SRs are rarely mentioned in Brenner's writings. (Petrov and Shakhtarov are both Marxists.) But in the novella *Mialef ad mem* ("From A. to M."), which was first published in 1906 and which drew on his experience in 1904 as a prisoner, brought by *étape* from Orel to Bobruisk, a young couple, both SRs, are assigned a brief but significant part. They are described as highly refined – he wears a pince-nez, and she, for example, cannot decide whether to address one of the more easy-going soldiers on guard in the polite plural form, *vy*, in accord with her "humanity," or by the contemptuous singular, *ty*, as would be correct vis-à-vis an armed representative of the regime. "Such are the difficult situations that plague the life of a *baryshnia* [a young lady], particularly that of a *baryshnia* who . . . with her partner, likewise an *intelligent*, is on her way to 'distant parts.'"

This couple were SRs and they busied themselves making propaganda among the tailors [fellow prisoners] from Mozyr who were Bundists. They set out to prove what great hopes had to be placed in the [Russian] village. He argued with vast

⁵¹ "Shanah ahat," *Ketavim*, vol. 2, pp. 881–1018 (and particularly, pp. 968–79, where there is a detailed description of the Jewish soldiers in the brigade); *Hashiloah*, vol. 19 (1908), particularly, pp. 411–17.

⁵² E.g.: "Petrov . . . knew that the god of the Jews, as Marx himself had stated, was money, money, money, and that they had no god." ("Misaviv lanekudah," *Ketavim*, vol. 1, p. 526; *Hashiloah*, vol. 14 [1904] p. 508.) As for Shakhtarov, who tried to stab Avraham Menuhin to death, he is described in the act as a "drunken beast . . . [whose] screaming made him sound like a wild pig." ("Min hameizar," *Ketavim*, vol. 2, p. 1089; *Ha'olam*, no. 15 [21 April/4 May, 1909], p. 6.)

confidence and she intervening, sighed quietly and on an even note: “Oh, our Russian peasant . . .” [*A nash russkii muzhik* . . . (printed in Cyrillic characters in the collected works but not in the original version)]

Given the sharply ironic nature of this vignette, Brenner did not have to spell out his belief that this same *muzhik* was a potential pogromshchik, and that the place of the Jewish revolutionaries (at least one of the SR couple is a Jew), was in their own national movements and in their own self-defense units.⁵³

Nonetheless, however focused Brenner had become by 1905 on the danger of anti-Jewish violence, the October pogroms of that year still exerted a shattering effect on him (and that was the case even before he heard that Haya Volfson had been killed in the course of a pogrom in Melitopol). For all his long-held conviction that the Jewish people was forever precariously situated on the brink of disaster, he clearly had not anticipated the extent of the anti-Jewish violence which, far more deadly than in 1881–82, now swept across more than six hundred cities, towns and shtetls in the tsarist empire.

From the series of articles published late in 1905 and early 1906, primarily in the Hebrew-language journal which he had recently founded in London, *Hame'orer*, it emerged that Brenner had totally reversed long-held and fundamental ideological positions. Judeophobia could no longer be treated as an issue of secondary importance compared to the imperative of reconstructing the internal coherence, pride and national self-consciousness of the Jewish people. Or as he put it in his piece entitled *Mikhtavim lerusiyah* (“Letters to Russia”):

Nothing can heal the wounds inflicted on the mass of the Jewish people by the Russian nation. . . . And there is no strategy to save ourselves in the short run. . . . We are not being slaughtered for our faith, murdered for our faults, stabbed for our virtues, nor being burnt as martyrs. We are forever the victim because we are hated, and we are hated because all men are wolves to each other – they hate and are hated – but while each wolf pack possesses its own separate forest, we do not; we are exiles and aliens.

Let us put an end to that. . . . Let us find an empty country and prepare it for our children and our children’s children. . . . A country! [ereẓ]. Any country that can be had, any country that we can begin to build up as our home soon;

⁵³ Mialef 'ad mem,” *Ketavim*, vol. 1, pp. 667–68; *Hame'orer*, no. 6 (June 1906), p. 6. Writing in 1906 (admittedly somewhat later than the time of Brenner’s supposed membership in the Party of Socialist Revolutionaries), he referred scornfully to those Jewish socialists – Bundists and Poale Zion – “who, turning apostate have renounced everything and are fighting under the flag of the SD or SR as though they were actually Russians.” (“Bibliografiyah,” *Ketavim*, vol. 3, p. 121; *Hame'orer*, no. 5 [June 1906, p. 32], [signed H.B. Zalel].)

a country not for today – it is too late for that – but for the morrow, for the generations to come, for the orphans of Nemirov in twenty, fifty, a hundred years.⁵⁴

However abrupt this volte-face – Brenner now found himself in the camp not of Ussishkin but of Israel Zangwill – it was by no means surprising. The surge towards the territorialist ideology carried all before it in the Poale Zion movement during the period of the revolution and the pogroms. Of the four revolutionary socialist parties that emerged from that hitherto ill-defined movement, three became fully committed to territorialism: the Socialist Zionist Labor Party (the SSRP); the Jewish Territorialist Labor Party – Poale Zion; and the Socialist Jewish Labor Party (the SERP). Even Nahman Syrkin, who relied heavily in his way of thinking on romantic, historically-rooted and mythological factors, now became a vociferous territorialist. The only party to remain loyal to Palestine was that led by Ber Borochov: The Jewish Socialist-Democratic Labor Party – Poale Zion.

In the face of the mass politics, the pogroms, the unprecedented waves of Jewish emigration and the persistent opposition of the Ottoman regime to Jewish settlement in Palestine, it was only natural that the idea of an alternative country could now win such support. The use of Yiddish, in the press as in literature, and the popularity of Yiddishism, likewise benefited directly from the rapidly changing realities of the time. Brenner, as a committed Hebrew writer, could not be entirely neutral in the so-called "language war," but he did now declare that the war should be set aside. "Even though," he wrote, characteristically

the future of Yiddish is clouded in doubt and the new generation is not being educated in it, the rock-solid fact remains – and it cannot be ignored – that despite all this, Yiddish is the spoken language of the majority of our nation. And only obtuse people can underestimate its validity or deny its popular and political significance.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ "Mikhtavim lerusiyah," *Ketavim*, vol. 3, pp. 101–102; *Hame'orer*, no. 1 (January 1906), pp. 8–9. (The reference to Nemirov, a town in Ukraine, carried a double resonance: its Jewish population was massacred by the Cossacks under Khmelnytsky's command in 1648; and its name had become a code-word for the Kishinev pogrom of 1903 – which left many homeless orphans – since the publication of Bialik's "Masa Nemirov" (cf. note 36 above.)

Haya Volfson's murder undoubtedly accentuated Brenner's reaction to the October pogroms still further. (See, in particular, the piece dedicated to her memory, although she is not mentioned by name: "Hu siper le'azmo," *Ketavim*, vol. 1, pp. 713–24; first published in New York, 1906, in a booklet entitled *Lo klum* (see *Ketavim*, vol. 1, p. ix, note.)

⁵⁵ "Min hasifrut ha'ivrit: sihot," *Ketavim*, vol. 3, p. 187. (This article was apparently first published in the Polish language journal brought out in Lwow: *Moriah: Miesięcznik*

Nonetheless, even though Brenner's political thinking during his London years thus evolved along lines broadly characteristic of the Zionist left, in one respect his voice emerged as highly distinctive. Nobody else at the time wrote so persistently and angrily in condemnation of the move toward Marxist determinism that was then sweeping all before it among the radicalized youth on "the Jewish street."

Together with the revolution, its quasi-messianic expectations and its calls for sacrifice, had come the fast-growing belief in politics as a science. To apply the correct laws of critical analysis; to discover the direction of the prevailing socio-economic currents in the given historical period; and to navigate the Jewish proletariat – and, ultimately, the Jewish people – along the route of least resistance, came to be seen as the basic task of the political party. The Bund, of course, had always insisted on its Marxist orthodoxy and on its doctrine as in full accord with the capitalist and industrial development of the Russian empire.

But now the revolutionary ideologues of the younger generation emerging from the Zionist movement, whether Jacob Lestchinsky and Moyshe Litvakov of the SSRP, for example, or Ber Borochof of the Palestine-oriented Poale Zion claimed for their respective parties a still greater scientific authority. While Bundist doctrine was focused narrowly on developments within the Russian empire, they argued, were not their theories more in line with Marxist doctrine in that they emphasized the importance of the world-wide economy, of intercontinental migration, of inter-ethnic competition within the working-class, and of European colonization overseas as a necessary consequence of capitalist crisis? Given these fundamental factors, was not the creation of a Jewish, and, ultimately socialist, state a necessity whether in Palestine (*pace* Borochof) or in some other more suitable territory (according to the SSRP)? Could there be any doubt that not consciousness (*soznatel'nost*) but self-propelling social and economic forces (*stikhiinost*) would determine the future? And, if so, was not the conduct of class warfare in the here and now the overriding duty of the party (be it territorialist or oriented toward Palestine)?

Brenner's scornful opposition to this entire trend of thought was constantly repeated in his works of fiction and in his journalism alike. This was an opposition that stemmed logically from his particular psychological frame of reference. Of key importance in this context was, surely, his unyielding commitment to the cause of Hebrew literature. In *Misaviv*

lanekudah, we are told that Yaakov Abramzon already in his teen-age years "was aware of the powerful impulse awakening within him. . . . He knew that 'he would become a Hebrew writer' . . . a writer amidst the Jewish people. Could there be any other happiness in the world? Could there be anything greater or more admirable than that?"⁵⁶

While, of course, Abramzon cannot simply be identified with the novelist who created him, everything suggests that these were, at times, indeed Brenner's feelings at the parallel stage of his life. And while the mood of exaltation rarely returned, the underlying sentiment always would. As already noted in the discussion of Brenner and his work for the Bund, loyalty to Hebrew when combined with loyalty to mass politics represented an all but untenable stance.

During the years of revolution, Yiddish – freed at last from governmental restrictions – rapidly won a dominant and unprecedented status in the Russian-Jewish world. The Hebrew journals *Hazefirah* and *Hashiloah* had to close down; and the sale of non-religious books in that language went into decline, threatening the survival of the publishing house, "*Achiasaf*."

In the face of this crisis, Brenner's reaction was not to switch to writing in Russian or Yiddish (although, as already noted, he did at times publish in Yiddish, sometimes out of ideological conviction, at other times as a source of livelihood),⁵⁷ but rather to insist that devotion to a lost

⁵⁶ *Ketavim*, vol. 1, p. 439; *Hashiloah*, vol. 14 (1904), p. 309.

⁵⁷ Yitzhak Bakon has argued convincingly that Brenner gradually shed his reluctance to write in the Yiddish press and began to publish thoughtful articles on such figures as N. Mikhailovsky and Y.L. Peretz. It is almost certainly overstated, however, to conclude (as Bakon does) that Brenner's employment in the production of the anarchist journal *Di fraye arbeter velt* involved his identification with the anarchist ideology and politics as generally understood at the time. In the Russian-Jewish world, anarchism was associated primarily with both radical internationalism (or "cosmopolitanism") and also a theatrical anti-clericalism (Yom Kippur balls, for example) – a combination totally alien to Brenner, even though a strongly libertarian strand can be discerned in his thought.

In the sketch ("*A kleyner felieton*") which he published in the *Di fraye arbeter velt* in December 1905, Brenner exploited the dialogic form to put forward his own credo, pitching a naïve and near-hysterical youngster, a territorialist, against the mature editor of an anarchist periodical (*Di fraye arbeter velt*, no less!). But with an ironic twist, all the strong lines were given to the wild young man who, fiercely rejecting the class analysis which blamed the pogroms all but exclusively on the tsarist autocracy and the "counter-revolution," argues that "a radical solution to the Jewish question is to be found only in a territory, a country of our own." For his part, the editor brushes aside the idea that he publish this viewpoint: "People would start saying that *Di fraye arbeter velt* has become a Zionist paper!" "That's shameful!" responds the youngster. "It's bad enough that the program of the Social Democrats does not permit them to see with open eyes just how black the world is. . . . [But] those who speak in the name of real freedom should value

cause, however Quixotic, was not without honor nor, indeed, without purpose. Writing in *Hame'orer* in January 1906, he responded bitterly to the Yiddishist triumphalism then so prevalent:

"What," they ask . . . , "is a language from the past doing in the life of the present?" . . . And it is true: there is no need for a dead language. . . . But what is to be done if it is in that dead language that we possess a literature which is three-thousand years old and is not dead? And what is to be done if by sweeping that dead language out of our lives, we destroy with our own hands the spiritual achievement of all the generations past?⁵⁸

Time and again, Brenner returned to the thought that the renaissance of Hebrew as a modern and national language was on the verge of extinction and that defiance, be it as heroic, be it as a last stand, was the only acceptable response. "We shall remain on the ramparts to the last,"⁵⁹ was how he concluded his January article. Or again (in the summer of 1906): "Let us sing of sorrow and death – and disappear!"⁶⁰ And (later in that same year): "Despair, too, is part of life and poets have need of it."⁶¹

The stronger the support on the Jewish left for the idea that ideology had to serve as a reflection of "life," the more space Brenner devoted to his caustic comments on Marxist determinism. True, in his *Misaviv lanekudah* of 1904, the signs of irritation were still mild. Even though the novel was no longer marked by the dualism (with Zionism and revolutionary Marxism held in balance) that had characterized *Bahoref*, his negative depiction of the dogmatists remained relatively good-humored. Thus, Abramzon has only half an ear for the one acquaintance (Haverstein) who as "an orthodox Marxist" expounds with a voice full of confidence his unswerving ideas about 'the mighty hand of the historical process'; or for an other (Burlak, "the eternal ekstern"), who pontificates about "the

the truth in life above all else and the suffering of a people should be placed above the fear of what this small *kloyz* or that clique might say."

The smallest possible print was used to publish Brenner's piece on the last page of the journal which, in general, followed a line typical of mainstream anarchism. (Y. Abramzon [Brenner], "A kleyner felieton," *Di fraye arbeter velt* [8 December 1905], p. 8; also in Brenner, *Hakatavim hayidiim; Di yidishe shriftn* [ed. Y. Bakon] [Beersheva: 1985], pp. 194–201.) Cf. Bakon, *Brener haz'air*, vol. 1, pp. 221–37.

⁵⁸ "Dapim (mipinkaso shel sofer 'ivri)," *Ketavim*, vol. 3, p. 104; *Hame'orer*, no. 1 (January 1906), p. 12 (signed H.B. Zalel).

⁵⁹ "Dapim," *Ketavim* vol. 3, p. 109; *Hame'orer*, no. 1, p. 14.

⁶⁰ "Pinkas katan," *Ketavim* vol. 3, p. 133; *Hame'orer*, no. 7–8 (July–August 1906), p. 72 (signed Bar Yohai).

⁶¹ "Mikhtavei sofer," *Ketavim* vol. 3, p. 140; *Hame'orer*, no. 9 (September 1906), p. 36 (signed H.B. Zalel).

Jewish question in relation to 'the movement' and proves on the authority of Karl Kautsky and others – . . . with a kind of gleeful satisfaction – that the Jews lack all the attributes required according to the experts to be considered a nation and that the only solution is 'categorically' to merge into the majority nationality."⁶² And the same mildly ironic tone is maintained in the passage where Abramzon's Marxist friends explain his unfashionable ideas by pigeon-holing him as, objectively, a representative of "the Jewish petty bourgeoisie which, due to the economic conditions, is in decline and losing the ground from under its feet, and hence sinks into fantasies and builds castles in the air."⁶³

However, by 1905 the tenor of Brenner's critique was changing radically. He was ready to grant that the Bund had created an impressive revolutionary machine and displayed genuine courage in the face of the pogroms,

but what has all this to do with their scientific priesthood? Or with their organizing themselves to rebel against "the oppressive regime of the Jewish bourgeoisie"? Alright, let them have their Marx! But to see in them heroes of the Jewish people? . . . And that . . . when [among other things] the faithful are running their own fund-raising drives [for self-defense] separate from everybody else?⁶⁴

His greatest irritation, though, was directed at the SSRP. True, from late in 1905, he shared the party's basic goals: territorialism, socialism (in some form) and participation in the revolution. But he rebelled against its reliance on "history to drive the Jewish proletariat in Russia to the realization of territorialism."⁶⁵ He regarded its attempts to compete with the Bund, and even to outflank it from the left, as unrealistic and hence pathetic – especially as its members generally shared all the faults familiar from the Bund (their original home in many cases, according to Brenner):

Nothing is missing: the same "scientific" theories; the same contempt for anything that smacks of the spiritual; the same tendency to pin labels on all human emotions; the same insistence on forcing life in all its variety into straitjackets. So, obviously, one cannot talk to them in terms of the national ethos which for them is simply non-existent. . . . In general, they reject any idea of the nation as a single whole, and they have no time at all for the history that has formed it.

⁶² "Misaviv lanekudah," *Ketavim*, vol. 1, p. 461; *Hashiloah*, vol. 14 (1904), pp. 321–22.

⁶³ *Ketavim*, vol. 1, p. 486; *Hashiloah*, vol. 14 (1904), p. 419.

⁶⁴ "Mikhtavim lerusiyah," *Ketavim*, vol. 3, p. 100; *Hame'orer*, no. 1 (January 1906), p. 7.

⁶⁵ "Mikhtav arokh shalah li," *Ketavim*, vol. 3, p. 80.

Their only concern is with the historical development of the contemporary Jewish condition – only today, with no reference heaven forbid, to the past.⁶⁶

Or, in the words of Yohanan (like the playwright, a Hebrew writer and, at the time, a territorialist) in Brenner's play *Mi'ever legevulin* ("Beyond the Limits") published early in 1907:

It's . . . simple; anybody who has some little familiarity with human nature and who torments himself with questions that cannot be answered, won't find contentment in a set ideology which focuses on the development of property relations and on the historical process as expounded by the dialectics of scientific socialism.⁶⁷

In his novella, *Mialef ad mem*, the members of the Poale Zion in prison found themselves always on the defensive:

All that [they] . . . sought to do with all their might was to demonstrate, to prove, to their opponents that they, Poale Zion – despite being Poale Zion – are . . . not reactionary, not bourgeois! At the same time, for all that, deep down in their hearts they harbored a sense of guilt and of inferiority in the face of the socialists pure-and-simple whose Marxist position did not shake with every wind. . . .

[If] the true Marxists concentrated their attention on the conditions of life, then they had to do likewise. But in life do we not see that some nations dominate and others are dominated! . . . At that moment, though, the rot of doubt would set in, warning them that the theory of Marx – may his soul rest in peace – dealt with nothing else but class warfare . . . and if so, they were in danger of developing a "non-proletarian ideology." And a "non-proletarian ideology" filled them with deadly fear. Only one accusation could, perhaps, be worse, downright libelous: Eretz Yisrael!⁶⁸

And Brenner sounded a similar note in his description of a meeting in the East End of London, held early in 1905, at which the speaker on behalf of Poale Zion assured his audience that they had no reason "to be afraid of him, as a Zionist . . . for he carries on the fight against bourgeois Zionism . . . even more vigorously than the socialist socialists. . . . His Zionism is only a means, with socialism as the end."⁶⁹

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 78–79.

⁶⁷ "Mi'ever legevulin," *Ketavim*, vol. 1, p. 778; *Hame'orer*, no. 2 (February 1907), p. 83.

⁶⁸ *Ketavim*, vol. 1, pp. 681–682; *Hame'orer*, no. 7–8 (July–August 1906), p. 19.

⁶⁹ "Ma'asim," *Ketavim*, vol. 3, p. 28; *Hazeman*, no. 57 (March 14/27, 1905), p. 1. Of the four parties which emerged from the amorphous Poale Zion movement during the revolutionary period, only the Jewish Territorialist Labor Party: Poale Zion was spared the full brunt of Brenner's scorn. He approved of the fact that this party, a territorialist and revolutionary reincarnation of the Minsk Poale Zion, invested less effort than the others in trying to prove its class-war credentials. Reviewing its journal, *Dos naye lebn*, in 1906, Brenner wrote that despite its modish rhetoric regarding "the proletariat and the broad Jewish masses", they understand the *true* situation of the Jewish petty bourgeoisie

Throughout his years in Russia, England and Austria-Hungary, Brenner declared that his one hope lay in the possible emergence of what he called "young forces" – forces of rejuvenation – from within the Jewish people. He did not spell out exactly what he meant by that term, but it is clear enough that he was thinking primarily of potential recruits from within his own social sub-group: the youth who, before breaking away from the old world, had gone through some or all the stages of the traditional Jewish education: the *heder*, certainly, but preferably also as the case might be, the *bet midrash*, the *kloyz* or the *yeshivah*. This was the "half-intelligentsia."

Much less apparent was what role he expected this group to play in concrete terms. At times, he appeared to have in mind primarily identification, whether as writers or as readers, with the (almost lost) cause of Hebrew literature. If, as he not infrequently declared in despair, "there is no Jewish nation across the world: the *Galut* has defeated us at last,"⁷⁰ their literary achievement – the actual translated into the aesthetic – was the most to be hoped for. Or, as he formulated it with reference to his journal, *Hame'orer*. "The national language, Hebrew, and nationalism itself are not so important in themselves . . . but rather only in so far as they give fitting and significant expression to our inner being, to the individual soul of each and every one of us: the two or three people in a given city, the tiny remnant scattered across the various states [of the world]."⁷¹

More generally, though, he clearly was thinking of the part to be played by the youth (literate in Hebrew) in the attempt to reimbue the Jewish people with a strong sense of self in the present and with pride in its past. However bleak an eye Brenner cast on the small-town Jewish libraries and the would-be national schools in his fiction, he still undoubtedly regarded them as of indispensable importance in the over-all scheme of things. And only the *polu-intelligenty* were fully equipped to further that cause effectively.

Beyond all that, of course, was the political arena. It was clear enough what Brenner was against. He had no time for the complex ideological theories, for the doctrinally monolithic parties and for the noisy competition

very well . . . ; and they do not see their territorialism as a mere means to their social goals. Their territorialism is all of a piece, out in the open, broad and national. They understand that unless this idea is realized, we will be utterly and totally lost." ("Bibliografiyah," *Ketavim*, vol. 3, p. 123; *Hame'orer*, no. 5 [June 1906], p. 33 [signed H.B. Zalel]).

⁷⁰ "Pinkas Katan," *Ketavim*, vol. 3, p. 125; *Hame'orer*, no. 7–8 (July–August 1906), p. 68.

⁷¹ "El hašotnim vehakorim," *Ketavim*, vol. 3, p. 145; *Hame'orer*, no. 11 (November 1906), on back-cover page.

for money and prestige between the rival organizations. Surely, an alternative of some kind could be provided by that small number among the youth that was both loyal to the nation but also “free from all spiritual servitude and narrow party discipline.”⁷²

How exactly Brenner expected so marginal a group to assert political leadership on “the Jewish street” was unclear, but he undoubtedly held to the view that there was no viable alternative. “Let us put aside theories,” he wrote in 1906, “[and] if anything can be saved let us try to do it.”⁷³ Unable to find any major force in the world of Russian-Jewish politics that could advance the national cause as he understood it, Brenner (influenced inter alia by Nietzsche and Mikhailovsky) thus fell back on extreme forms of voluntarism and avant-garde thinking.⁷⁴

However, during the course of 1908 when he was already in Lemberg, Brenner’s belief – hitherto almost devoid of concrete meaning – that “the young forces” would somehow take on a leadership role, abruptly gained real focus. In that year, the Hapo’el Hatsair (Young Worker) party, established in Palestine by a few dozen young immigrants from the Russian empire, began to bring out its Hebrew-language journal under that same name.

The party had been created in 1905, but at that time and over the next year or two, it does not appear to have caught Brenner’s attention. Its foundation, after all, had coincided with his move toward territorialism. With the failure of Israel Zangwill and the Jewish Territorial Organization (ITO) to locate any region of that world suited to their goal, however, Brenner like many others, including Nachman Syrkin, began to drift back towards the idea of Palestine as the only conceivable (albeit, in their eyes, still highly unrealistic) option. From 1907 onwards his letters contained frequent references to the possibility that he himself might opt to go to that country (“not as a Zionist, but as somebody with a longing for the sun. . . . I want to work there as an agricultural laborer?”).⁷⁵ Other options raised in his correspondence at the time included moving to New

⁷² “La’mitkaven letovah,” *Ketavim*, vol. 3, p. 151; *Hame’orer*, no. 1 (January 1907), back-cover page.

⁷³ “Mikhtavim lerusiyah,” *Ketavim*, vol. 3, pp. 102; *Hame’orer*, no. 1 (January, 1906), p. 9.

⁷⁴ In this context, it is understandable that Brenner and Radler-Feldman decided to find space in *Hame’orer* for Thomas Carlyle’s ideas on heroes and heroism. (See, in particular, Brenner’s comment, “He’arah,” *Ketavim*, vol. 3, pp. 151–153; *Hame’orer*, no. 2 [February 1907], p. 88.)

⁷⁵ Brenner to Y. Klausner (March 25, 1907) in *Igerot Y.H. Brenner*, p. 360. (In a letter written in Yiddish of July 20, 1907 to Yehoshua Radler-Feldman [Rav Binyamin], Brenner

York, returning to London, staying longer in Lemberg or moving to some small Galician town where he would work undisturbed as a type-setter.

Within this context, the appearance of the new journal, *Hapo’el Hatsair*, could only be perceived by Brenner as something of a *deus ex machina*. Here was an organized group drawn from among those “young forces,” “new Jews,”⁷⁶ on whom – in the abstract – Brenner had always counted. The Hapo’el Hatsair party was situated in Palestine; championed Hebrew as the language to be adopted by the Yishuv; saw itself as integrally involved in the project of national regeneration along roughly the lines advocated by Ahad Ha’am and other ideologues of the Hibat Zion movement; and had a membership drawn from young men and women who had dedicated themselves as agricultural workers to the cause of “productivization.”

In an article of 1908, Brenner attacked the official monthly of the World Zionist Organization (the newly founded *Ha’olam*) for ignoring the existence of the party and its broader significance:

Everything that you could possibly want is discussed there [in *Ha’olam*]... but nowhere in it is to be found the slightest hint of what is absolutely crucial and without which there is no hope for Zionism – the immigration of young pioneers to Eretz Yisrael. In Palestine today there is a small group of true Zionists, of real workers (at least, in so far as one can judge by what they say in print, in their truly appealing journal, *Hapo’el Hatsair*). And this group is calling for young idealists in the Galut to come and join them.⁷⁷

And in another article of 1908, responding to somebody who had accused him of being a Yiddishist – and hence in contrast to himself not a true nationalist or Zionist – Brenner wrote: “A Zionist? I am not sure. I am under the impression that he has never considered – and will never consider – the possibility that he himself might go to Palestine in order to make a contribution of his own to developing the Yishuv.”⁷⁸

remarked that “I am no longer going to Palestine; I am hostile to the chosen people [*am hanivhar*] and to the corpse-like would-be Erets-yisroel,” *ibid.*, p. 381.)

⁷⁶ For Brenner’s use of the term, “the new Jews,” see e.g.: “Mikhtavei sofer,” *Ketavim*, vol. 3, p. 140; *Hame’orer*, no. 9 (September 1906), p. 36. (“We hear the cry constantly: give strength to the new Jews! But what qualities do we expect these new Jews to have? Where have they come from? Where *can* they come from? And whither are they headed?”)

⁷⁷ “Dapim mipinkas sifrut,” *Ketavim*, vol. 3, p. 184; *Hed hazeman*, no. 64 (March 15/28, 1908, p. 2. (In the newspaper, the article is entitled, “Mitokh hapinkas.”)

⁷⁸ “Mitokh hapinkas,” *Ketavim*, vol. 3, p. 232; *Hed hazeman*, no. 121 (March 4/17, 1908), p. 1. (In the collected works, the numbering of the sections in this series of articles is incorrect; the passage quoted here is actually from section 5, while what is given as section 5 in the *Ketavim* was no. 6 in the paper, no. 122 [March 5/14, 1908].)

Not long afterwards, Brenner departed Lemberg for Jaffa. He would spend the next, and last, twelve years of his life in Palestine. He himself, after all, belonged to that same younger generation within the half intelligentsia that formed the core of what would become known as the Second Aliya. And in 1909, he was still only twenty-eight years old. However, the eye with which he was to observe life in the Yishuv would remain as mordant as ever, and his pen as caustic.

Conclusion

Even when Brenner's literary and formalistic writings are subjected to close scrutiny, significant difficulties remain in trying to trace the development of his political credo, allegiances and activity in the European period of his life. Was he ever truly committed to a party and, if so, to which party or parties? How far did his thinking reflect the ideological trends of the time, and how far, on the contrary, were they idiosyncratic?

Scholarly opinion regarding these issues is sharply divided. On the one hand, there is the leading authority on the young Brenner, Yitzhak Bakon, whose research has uncovered a veritable treasure trove of detailed knowledge about his early life and writings. Basing himself on the fact – in part, his own discoveries – that Brenner was ready to put his skills, variously as a translator, editor and writer of agitational materials at the disposal of many different groups, Bakon depicts him as something of a political chameleon, emerging in rapid succession first as a disciple of Ahad Ha'am's version of Hebrew-based nationalism and then as an activist member of the Bund. Once in London, in 1904, he at first played a leading role as a member both of the Poale Zion Party and, simultaneously – as Bakon describes it – of the émigré branch of the Party of Socialist Revolutionaries; only then, disillusioned with these organizations, to go on late in 1905 to join a branch of the Yiddish-speaking anarchist movement, while at the same time agitating vigorously on behalf of territorialism.

At the opposite extreme is an alternative reading of Brenner's politics. To see him as a fully committed and activist member of any specific party or advocate of any predetermined ideology is, according to this view, to misunderstand the essential nature of the man. He was too much of an individualist, too skeptical and too pessimistic to identify with any form of group thinking. The dialogic and, often, polyphonic character of Brenner's fiction has thus to be seen as not only a literary device but, rather, as reflecting the temperament of a lonely figure unwilling to be tied down by doctrinal formulae.

Or as Menchem Brinker has put it, Brenner saw himself

together with the national literature itself as above any type of narrow party-mindedness. Seeing the life of the nation in dualistic terms, as combining a long-drawn-out process of mortal decline with some few signs of a new vitality that might or might not lead somewhere, the critical observer could be led to a temporary identification with one or other of the various parties on the "Jewish street." . . . [However] frequently enough he did so not because of, but despite the party programs. . . .

His [Brenner's] commitment to the role of writer and critic stood higher with him than any other obligation; and translated into the duty to observe reality with an unsparing and even merciless truthfulness. Guided by this sense of self, he became as it were his own party – a party which he shared with all those writers and critics whom he respected: "the writers' party." . . . Brenner never participated in the hopes that were built into the programs of those parties which he joined.⁷⁹

When set, then, against these conflicting viewpoints what conclusions can be drawn from the discussion developed in this article? First, certainly, there can be no denying Menachem Brinker's thesis that Brenner's devotion to his role as a writer in the Hebrew language, giving voice to his own generation and to his own kind, carried overwhelming weight in his psyche. But from this fact it does not necessarily follow that his political commitments and party attachments were always tentative and tangential.

On the contrary, we have argued here that in his Homel and Belostok years (from approximately late in 1899 until late in 1901) he combined loyalty to the Hebrew-based cultural nationalism of Ahad Ha'am with active membership in the Bundist underground – an unusual combination of allegiances, to be sure, but not impossible at that inchoate stage of Russian-Jewish politics. Once in London in 1904–5, his active, even leading role in the Poale Zion movement, and specifically in its pro-Palestine wing, has likewise to be seen as the expression of well-elaborated belief at the time (in contrast to his work for SR and anarchist publications which he would hardly have undertaken if he had not desperately needed paid employment).

As with his Bundism, so now with Poale Zion, Brenner was swimming with the tide – both movements were very much on the upswing when he joined them. The same was true when, in the wake of the calamitous pogroms of October 1905, he abandoned his loyalty to Eretz-Yisrael and became an impassioned champion of the territorialist cause.

⁷⁹ Brinker, *'Ad hasimtah hateveriyani*, pp. 209–8.

But the difference now was that, despite this ideological turn so characteristic of that moment, he found himself unable to identify with any given party within the socialist wing of the territorialist movement – or, indeed, with the revolutionary Left on “the Jewish Street,” generally. Pouring scorn, often in prophetic style, on the then dominant hold of Marxist determinism, of “scientific” socialism and class-war doctrine, he advocated – however much out of fashion – both national unity in the face of the pogroms and of the territorialist imperative; and also the formation of an avant-garde to advance the settlement of a Jewish homeland somewhere in the world.

With the collapse of the Russian revolution in 1907, Brenner, already cut off from his would-be allies, thus ended up all but totally isolated ideologically and organizationally. His decision of late 1908 to go to Palestine and to join forces with the Hapoel Hatzair party – oriented, as it was, towards youth, Hebrew and labor – has therefore to be seen as a desperate attempt to reanchor himself in the world of Jewish politics.

The Paradoxical Politics of Marginality

Thoughts on the Jewish Situation during the Years

1914–1921

Armistice Day, which every year recalls the end of the First World War on November 11, 1918, attracts little attention nowadays. This fact is, of course, due in part to the passage of time; hardly any war veterans remain alive today to honor their comrades-in-arms who fell in that fearsome conflict.

But there is a far more basic factor involved here. From our present-day vantage point, some seventy years later, the war appears less the finite event that came to an end in 1918 and more the opening episode in a prolonged era of political cataclysm. One world war led inexorably to the next, and both wars brought change of a kind and on a scale that even the most prescient observer could hardly have envisaged early in 1914. Who foresaw that tens of millions of soldiers, mainly conscripts, would lose their lives in the carnage?

Over the space of a mere three decades, the European states that had come to control most of the world since the sixteenth century, ground each other down. When the ancien régime in Central and Eastern Europe collapsed in 1917–18, the vacuum was filled by rival totalitarian systems locked in combat until the one destroyed the other. The post-1945 era saw both the rapid disintegration of the far-flung European empires and hegemony passing to Communist Russia and the United States, now become superpowers.

The fact that the leaders on the stage in World War II had all been actively involved in the drama of 1914–21 (Churchill, the first lord of the Admiralty; Hitler, the frontline corporal; Stalin, a member of Lenin's inner coterie; Roosevelt, the assistant secretary of the U.S. Navy; Mao,

one of the founders of the Chinese Communist party) only serves to emphasize the high degree of continuity that marks what can be best seen, perhaps, as a thirty-years' war.

For their part, the Jewish people, whether as object or subject, found themselves intensely involved from the very first in this long-drawn-out upheaval. In World War I the Jews in many areas had to suffer mass expulsions and innumerable pogroms directed specifically against them. In retrospect these atrocities taken together with the genocidal slaughter of the Armenian nation in Anatolia can be seen to have done much to prepare the psychological ground for the attempt to be made some two decades later to wipe out the Jewish people totally.

The Bolshevik Revolution, the Balfour Declaration, the Nazi putsch in Bavaria and the highly restrictive immigration act passed by the U.S. Congress were all, in their different ways, products of the last convulsive years of the war or the first highly disturbed years of the peace. They represented the newly emerging parameters within which the Jews, whether collectively or individually, would have to make whatever decisions they could in the complex interwar hiatus and in the apocalyptic fury soon to be unleashed.

However, if the past is to be understood in its own terms, its own context, rather than in long-term (and very possibly transient) perspective, then it is not sufficient simply to view the two wars as one continuum. Contemporaries, after all, spoke not of the First World War, but of the Great War. The suffering in 1914–18 was as terrible as that in 1939–45 (for the British and French armies, indeed, it was far greater in the former period). But, except among the soldiers in the trenches, there was also a predominant faith at the time that there had to be some ultimate meaning in all the anguish, that some good had to result from so much loss. However the new order was pictured – whether in terms of national liberation and Wilson's Fourteen Points, lasting peace and a League of Nations, socialist revolution and the abolition of state frontiers, Pax Britannica or German *Kultur* – it served as a vision, a motivating force, of immense power. Very little of this intense hope, utopianism even, remained by the time of the next war.

Here, too, the experience of the Jewish people mirrored – but also magnified – that of the belligerent societies in general. The gulf separating the tangible realities of the Jewish situation from the way in which that situation was perceived proved time and again to be immense. Never before in modern history (specifically, since the expulsion from Spain) had the inherent vulnerability and weakness of the Jews as a scattered

minority been exposed with such insistent brutality and impunity. Yet at the very same time, many Jews – movements, groups, individuals – came to the conclusion that the moment of emancipation or autoemancipation (national liberation, however variously defined) had arrived. The Jewish people had it within their grasp at last to solve the Jewish question.

Perhaps even more startling was the fact that, within political circles (the governments, the armies, the press) in the different belligerent camps, this perception of the Jewish people as one of the powers-that-be was widely shared. It goes without saying that such a conception or prejudice – often, indeed, a superstition – could be, and was, highly dangerous. In wartime any even supposedly powerful force that is not totally allied can easily become totally suspect. But it is also true that to be seen as strong can itself become the source of actual strength.

Herein lay the key paradox of Jewish history during and after World War I. It goes far to explain why for the Jews this proved to be a period of both untold loss and of unprecedented political achievement, of destruction and of opportunity. Here, again, the experience of the first war was very different from that of the next. In World War II, the Jewish people were simply trapped. The Nazis feared, demonized, the Jews and determined to destroy them; the Allies in contrast understood the simple truth. The Jews had nowhere else to turn and their full support (for whatever it was worth) could be taken for granted. There was nothing paradoxical in the Jewish situation from 1939–45.

There is, as yet, no single book that chronicles the multiple blows inflicted on innumerable Jewish communities in the years 1914–21 by myriad armies and armed bands, although this is a theme that has recently become the subject of renewed interest.¹ In outline the basic facts are, of course, well known.

The greatest concentrations of Jewish population in Europe were situated in areas that in this period became at one time or another major theaters of war. And the same fate befell the small but politically and symbolically important Jewish community (the Yishuv) in Palestine. What this meant can in part be sensed by simply recalling how many different armies fought their way into and out of some of the greatest cities in the Pale of Settlement and Galicia over the space of a few years.

¹ For example, David G. Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse: Responses to Catastrophe in Modern Jewish Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: 1984), 115–132.

Take Lvov (Lemberg, Lwów, Lviv), for example. Austrian at the outbreak of the First World War, it was conquered by Russia in September 1914 and reconquered by Austria in June 1915. With the defeat of the Central Powers, it witnessed pitched battles between Polish and Ukrainian armies in the winter of 1918, finally being incorporated into independent Poland. Then, there is the example of Vilna (Wilno, Vilnius), which was part of the Tsarist Empire in 1914. Captured by the German army in September 1915, it became the capital of an independent Lithuania at the end of 1918 and of a Soviet Lithuania in January 1919. Vilna was then conquered by the new Polish army in April 1919 and reconquered by the Red Army in August 1920, which delivered the city to an independent Lithuania. Finally, the city was overrun and annexed by Poland in October of that same year.

The fate of Kiev was worse still. It was the scene of a Bolshevik uprising in January 1918 that was suppressed by the forces of the Ukrainian Rada. In February 1918 it was conquered by the Red Army and then in March by the Germans. In December it was taken over by Ukrainian forces; in February 1919, again by the Red Army; in August, by Petliura's men first and then by Denikin's Volunteer army; then in December, by the Soviets for the third time. Even that was not the end, though, because the Poles (under Pilsudski's direction) occupied the city in May 1920 for a brief period until the Communist forces returned for the last time.²

Not all these armies were actively hostile to the Jewish populations per se. On the contrary, at various times the Austrian and German occupation forces tended toward a policy of preferential treatment for the Jews, seeing in them a potential source of support in a hostile Slavic environment. Advocates of this policy made much of the fact that Yiddish was a Germanic language.³ During the Russian Civil War, the Red Army was committed (at least in theory, if not always in practice) to the physical protection of the Jewish communities.

Of course, the Jews were by no means the only people to be selected at various stages for draconian treatment. The German minority dispersed across the Russian Empire proved very vulnerable to violence,

² On the course of World War I in Eastern Europe and the Civil War in Russia, see, for example, Norman Stone, *The Eastern Front, 1914–1917* (London: 1975); David Footman, *Civil War in Russia* (New York: 1961); Peter Kenez, *Civil War in South Russia, 1919–1920* (Stanford: 1977). On political developments in Poland, see Norman Davies, *God's Playground. A History of Poland*, vol. 2 (Oxford: 1981), 378–410.

³ On official German attitudes toward the Jews in occupied Poland, see Egmont Zechlin, *Die deutsche Politik und die Juden im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Göttingen: 1969), 116–237.

especially as one of its religious denominations, the Mennonites, were pacifists. (The Armenian tragedy has already been mentioned.) Again, to a significant extent, the Jews were simply victims of the ever-mounting chaos of Russian scorched-earth tactics, spreading famine, cold (the lack of domestic fuel) and disease. The death rate in the Vilna Jewish community, for example, was almost five times higher in early 1917 than it had been in 1914 – over ninety-seven as against some twenty-one per thousand.⁴

Nevertheless, the fact remains that time and again it was the Jewish component within the civilian population that was deliberately picked out as the target. In part, especially during the Russian Civil War, this victimization was caused by the sheer defenselessness of so many Jewish communities, literally or virtually unarmed and culturally alienated from the surrounding society. But to a very great extent, it resulted directly from the pervasive idea, widely accepted as axiomatic by the staffs of most (perhaps all) of the armies, that the Jews were, or could become, a real danger to their conduct of the war.

Both the chaos of war and deliberate policy played their full share in the mass displacement of the Jewish population in the Eastern war zone during the first year of the fighting, 1914–15. As the Russian armies advanced into Galicia in the early weeks of the conflict, the Jews fled toward the west en masse in fear of the Russian troops, particularly the Cossacks with their reputation for carrying rape and death into Jewish communities. More serious still, however, was the policy of deliberate expulsion executed by the Russian High Command under Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich and General Lanushkevich.

So great was their paranoid fear of the Jews as a potential fifth column (aggravated, in all probability, by news of a pro-Jewish orientation on the German side) that it was deemed essential to drive hundreds of thousands of Jews from their homes both on the northern and southwestern fronts. This was usually done at a moment's notice, in many cases in the depth of winter. Even when the roads became hopelessly clogged, impeding essential military transport, the policy was considered too important to cancel. Although there can be no exact figures, it would probably be no exaggeration to say that about a million Jews had been made homeless by the end of 1915. Destitute, they crowded, on the one hand, into

⁴ Salo W. Baron, *The Russian Jew Under Tsars and Soviets* (New York: 1964), 194. Cf. S. Weissenberg, "Di rusishe yidn in tsayt fun milkhome un revolutsye," *Bleter far yidishe demografye, statistik un ekonomik* 1 (1923), 17–20.

Cracow, Budapest and Vienna and, on the other, into Vilna, Moscow and innumerable urban centers both inside and outside the Pale.⁵

In Palestine, too, the Jewish population lived throughout the war in fear of imminent disaster. The commanding officer of the Turkish forces in Syria, Djemal Pasha, saw in the Yishuv a real security threat. In December 1914, shortly after his appointment, he ordered the immediate expulsion of all the Russian Jews from Jaffa, and they were promptly crowded onto an outbound ship. By the end of 1915 some eleven thousand Jews from Palestine had found refuge in Egypt. Still worse was to come in April 1917 as the military situation became critical. The entire remaining Jewish population of Jaffa was ordered out of the city, and the nine thousand refugees had to fend for themselves as best they could elsewhere in the country. Again, the death rate from starvation and disease reached catastrophic proportions. That the fate of the Armenians awaited the Yishuv was the ever-present dread.⁶

The worst was still to come. With the collapse in 1917–18 of orderly government in Eastern Europe – caused by the military defeats, the subsequent revolutions and the political fragmentation of the multinational empires – the Jewish population fell victim to wave upon wave of pogroms. The indiscriminate slaughter of the Jews reached its height during the year 1919. It was then that the civil war raged at its fiercest in Russia and that chaos was unleashed in large areas of the emergent Polish state, particularly in Posen and Eastern Galicia.

Involved, here, were not only the traditional interethnic tensions and hatreds dividing Poles, Ukrainians, Russians and Jews, but also a highly dangerous factor of the most recent origin. The conspicuous role played in the Bolshevik leadership by a number of Jews attracted ever-greater attention as the civil war raged on year after year. The fact that men like Trotsky, Kamenev, Zinoviev, Sverdlov, Joffe and Radek regarded themselves as divorced from the Jewish people and as fierce opponents of Judaism and of Jewish nationalism, indeed, as nothing but members of the international proletariat, made no difference. The anti-Bolshevik forces increasingly described the Communist regime as the product of a Jewish conspiracy against the Christian nations, Russian or Ukrainian as

⁵ On the expulsions, see American Jewish Committee, *The Jews in the Eastern War Zone* (New York: 1916); Vladimir Kossovsky, *Der yidisher khurbm in rusland* (New York: 1915); National Workmen's Committee for Jewish Rights, *The War and the Jews of Russia* (New York: 1916).

⁶ For example, Avraham Elmaliakh, *Eretz yisrael vesuriyah biyemei milhemet ha'olam*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem: 1929), 26–109.

the case might be. Never before had “Beat the Jews, save Russia!” – an age-old slogan – appeared to make such obvious sense. As the armies of Denikin, Petliura, Makhno, Grigorev, Pilsudski, Haller and of countless less well-known commanders crisscrossed the Ukraine, including Eastern Galicia, so pogroms increased in number and intensity. Again, there can be no accepted figures, but tens of thousands of Jews were killed: in all probability more than one hundred thousand in all (although many estimates put the number as twice that).⁷

Faced by these disasters, which followed each other with such rapidity and in so many different places at once, the Jewish people with their many political organizations and international ties – that is, world Jewry, a supposedly awesome power – was rarely able to take real preventive action. The wartime conditions made it immensely complicated to decide on any political initiatives, even those of the most immediate urgency.

Coordination between the major Jewish communities of Europe and North America, which had become standard practice in moments of crisis since the Damascus case of 1840, was now obviously out of the question. The Jews of France and England, on the one hand, and of Germany and Austria, on the other, were divided not only by the lines of war but even more by the most intense patriotism. That Martin Buber enthusiastically supported the German cause on the outbreak of the war was the typical, that Gershom Scholem did not was the aberrant.

Furthermore, there were factors that hampered the traditional techniques of intervention (*shtadlanut*) – the appeal to a friendly government to use its good offices on behalf of the endangered Jewish communities. The British, for example, were highly reluctant to do anything that might offend the sensibilities of the Tsarist regime at a time (1914–15) when Russia was shouldering an inordinate share of the war effort and suffering millions of casualties. When the British ambassador, Sir George Buchanan, did finally raise the issue with Nicholas II in 1916, he found himself embarrassed by having to conduct it as a “monologue, not a conversation.”⁸

Even beyond this, though, there was the awkward fact that the military commanders enjoyed vast powers in the areas under military control and

⁷ On the pogroms of 1918–21, see Elias Tcherikover, *Antisemitizm un pogromen in ukrayne 1917–1918 (tsu der geshikhte fun ukraynish-yidishe batsiungen)* (Berlin: 1923); *idem*, *Di ukrayner pogromen in yor 1919* (New York: 1965); Leo Motzkin (ed.), *Die Judenpogrome in Russland*, 2 vols. (Cologne: 1910); J. Batchinsky et al., *The Jewish Pogroms in the Ukraine* (Washington, D.C.: 1919).

⁸ Quoted in Isaiah Friedman, *The Question of Palestine, 1914–1918* (London: 1973), 41.

often chose to ignore advice or even to circumvent orders from their own governments. Nikolai Nikolaevich and Djemal Pasha both exemplified this phenomenon. Later, during the anarchy of the Russian Civil War, the generals in command of the White armies increasingly threw off all civilian control, ignored the admonitions of the Western powers that supplied them with much of their money and matériel, and pleaded, with varying degrees of truth, that they could not control their troops. As for the so-called green armies (Makhno, Grigorev), they lived off the land and were largely out of touch with the outside world.

When it came to another much-tried method of modern Jewish politics, public protest – mass meetings, rallies, street demonstrations – the inhibiting factors now at work were greater still. To protest against enemy countries in this way was an empty gesture, to do so against allied states in wartime could be construed as an act of disloyalty.

America, neutral until April 1917, was the one major country where the voice of Jewish anguish and anger could, and to some extent did, make itself heard loud and clear. But in the United States it turned out that there were major restraints: Jewish leaders constantly had to weigh the possible dangers involved. Might not the Russian regime or the Turkish regime or both (or at least their generals) react to such outside interference in their military affairs by redoubling their efforts to overcome the Jewish menace?

The Jewish communities in the war zones were widely seen in the United States as held hostage, their safety dependent on the judgment of their American brethren. One of the major reasons for the constant postponement first of the elections to the American Jewish Congress (until July 1917) and then of the congress itself (until December 1918) was this fear that speeches or resolutions furiously condemning the Romanov and Ottoman regimes could well cause disaster on an as yet unprecedented scale.

All these restraints and inhibitions likewise hampered the pursuit of long-term goals. The Zionist movement (to take just one example) as an international organization declared its policy in the war to be one of neutrality. Its members were expressly forbidden to negotiate over the future of Palestine with any of the states hostile to the Ottoman Empire. Any other policy, it was decided, would endanger the Yishuv; besides, Turkey (allied to the Central Powers) could well end up on the winning side.

Beyond all such handicaps, there was also the fact that in the highly charged atmosphere of the war, anti-Zionism within the Jewish community, although much reduced in numerical support, frequently became far

more intense. The Zionist theory that Jews constituted not only a religion but also a nationality could be interpreted, of course, as incompatible with total loyalty to one's adopted country. To prove their undeviating patriotism to England in its hour of need, Edwin Montagu (secretary of state for the colonies) and Claude G. Montefiore (president of the Anglo-Jewish Association) were ready to fight tooth and nail against any plan that could lead to the emergence of a Jewish state in Palestine. In so doing they attained a greater measure of success than is often realized.⁹

This situation, which left so many communities all but defenseless against constant harassment and violence, might well have induced despair and passivity in the Jewish people and their leadership. Just such a reaction was to be given classic expression in *Doctor Zhivago* many years later by Boris Pasternak, who had been a twenty-four-year-old writer and Jewish *intelligent* in 1914. Having been an unwilling witness to yet one more scene in which a hapless old Jew was tormented by Cossacks, Misha Gordon, a Jewish doctor in the novel, stated the view (clearly Pasternak's own) that there was absolutely no point in perpetuating the existence of a people who had to suffer so much for no reason:

Their national idea had forced them, century after century, to be a nation and nothing but a nation – and they have been chained to this deadening fate all through the centuries when all the world was being delivered from it by a new force which had come out of their own midst... Why didn't the intellectual leaders of the Jewish people ever go beyond facile *Weltschmerz* and ironical wisdom? Why have they not – even at the risk of bursting like boilers with the pressure of their duty – disbanded this army which keeps on fighting and being massacred nobody knows for what? Why don't they say... "Come to your senses, stop. Don't hold on to your identity... You are the first and best Christians in the world."¹⁰

The anguish felt in these words echoed the realities of the war situation, but Gordon's reaction was far from typical. On the contrary, in large part, Jewish organizations and leaders (whether acting in representative or private capacities) saw in the lengthening tally of disasters a challenge to be met by an obstinate refusal to capitulate. Despite all the apparently insurmountable handicaps, the crisis years remarkably witnessed

⁹ On the impact of Montagu's opposition to a Jewish regiment and to a pro-Zionist declaration, see Friedman, *The Question of Palestine*, 259–281; Leonard Stein, *The Balfour Declaration* (London: 1961), 496–501; M. Vereté, "The Balfour Declaration and Its Makers," *Middle Eastern Studies* 6 (1970), 63; Ronald Sanders, *The High Walls of Jerusalem: A History of the Balfour Declaration and the Birth of the British Mandate for Palestine* (New York: 1983), 563–577, 590–593.

¹⁰ Boris Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago* (New York: 1958), 105.

an unprecedented mobilization of resources, highly imaginative improvisations and in some quarters a maverick readiness to take risks even at the price of irresponsibility.

First, after all, there was one sphere of activity that in principle at least was neither divisive nor political. It proved relatively easy to rally the Jews outside the war zones to the cause of relief – organizing aid (money, food, clothing) for the victims of the war and the violence. Of course, even here the barriers of fire separating the belligerent states complicated matters enormously and compelled a drastic division of labor. Thus, aid to the Jews in occupied Poland had to be organized by German Jewry, which sprouted a series of organizations dedicated to the cause. During the course of the war the major aid organization, the Hilfsverein, collected DM15.5 million for the Polish Jews then under German rule.¹¹ In Britain money was raised for the refugees on the Russian side of the line.¹²

But the greatest load was taken up by American Jews (over 3 million strong), who were able for three years to enjoy the benefits of neutrality. In November 1914 the Joint Distribution Committee was established – under the chairmanship of Felix Warburg – to coordinate relief efforts overseas. It was able to work on both sides of the front, transmitting funds to Russia, on the one hand, and to Poland (via Germany) and Palestine, on the other. One of its main functions became the delivery of funds transmitted privately from families in North America to their relatives in the war zones.¹³ It has been estimated that the JDC disbursed in cash or kind some \$15 million in Eastern Europe and Palestine during the years 1914–18; a further sum of close to \$23 million was expended in the years 1919–20. In addition, it processed some \$10.5 million, privately transmitted during the period 1914–21.¹⁴

Added to the considerable sums raised locally in Russia and Poland, the aid from overseas made it possible to employ a complex network of agencies in this effort to save the destitute from death. Both volunteer committees and hundreds of salaried officials played a key role. With the

¹¹ Steven E. Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers: The East European Jew in German and German Jewish Consciousness, 1800–1933* (Madison: 1982), 160; cf. Ernst Feder, *Politik und Humanität: Paul Nathan, ein Lebensbild* (Berlin: 1929), 110–116.

¹² In England the Fund for the Relief of the Jewish Victims of the War in Russia had Leopold de Rothschild as its president, Lord Swaythling as its treasurer and Charles B. Sebag-Montefiore and Otto Schiff as its honorary secretaries.

¹³ Zosa Szajkowski, “Private and Organized American Jewish Overseas Relief, 1914–38,” *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 57 (1967–68), 52–106, 191–253, 285–350.

¹⁴ Moses A. Leavitt, *The JDC Story, 1914–1952* (New York: 1953), 7–8.

gradual breakdown of order – the elimination, in effect, of all distinction between the front and the rear – the work of the emissaries became dangerous in the extreme. In 1920 Israel Friedlander, one of America's best-known Jewish scholars, was among those murdered by *pogromshchiki* while traveling in the Ukraine on behalf of the Joint Distribution Committee.

Relief was defined as a strictly philanthropic enterprise, and this was a major source of its strength. But in practice it proved impossible to exclude politics entirely even from this area of activity. In America, for example, even though distribution was concentrated in the hands of one overarching institution (the JDC), collection was divided among three independent organizations representing, respectively, the German Jewish oligarchy; the traditional, synagogue-oriented Jews of Eastern European origin; and the Jewish labor movement, with its socialist orientation.¹⁵ At the other end of the pipeline, at least during the years 1914–17, the distribution network in Russia became the arena for party political and ideological struggles that were permitted no other legal outlet.

More important still was the fact that without the political acquiescence of the various governments involved, the relief organizations could have achieved next to nothing. The German, Russian and Turkish regimes all came to the conclusion that it was to their benefit to permit or even encourage (as the case might be) the work of the JDC and its associated organizations.

Elaborate negotiations at the highest levels were often required. For emergency supplies to be rushed to Palestine in 1914–15, for example, the U.S. Navy had to employ its own ships; the British and French governments had to lift their naval blockade for the occasion; and the Ottoman authorities had to cooperate actively.¹⁶ (It should be noted that in Palestine about 45 percent of the aid went to the Muslim and Christian populations.)¹⁷ Or, again, even when the United States entered the war, the JDC was able to gain permission from both sides to continue to dispatch aid – via Holland, a neutral country – to Polish Jewry in the German-occupied areas.¹⁸

¹⁵ The organizations were, respectively, the American Jewish Relief Committee for Sufferers from the War, the Central Committee for the Relief of Jews Suffering Through the War and the People's Relief Committee for the Jewish War Sufferers. See Zosa Szajkowski, "Concord and Discord in American Jewish Overseas Relief, 1914–24," *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science* 14 (1969), 99–158.

¹⁶ Isaiah Freidman, *Germany, Turkey and Zionism, 1897–1918* (Oxford: 1977). 194–196.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 271.

¹⁸ Leavitt, *The JDC Story*, 6.

That governments thus proved ready to permit international aid to reach starving populations in the war zones is, perhaps, not so surprising. It somewhat eased an intolerable burden weighing on the governments directly in charge, and was a relatively easy way to claim credit for humanitarianism. The destruction of civilian populations as an integral part of total war was a strategy only reluctantly approached by most of the states during World War I.

However, the fact is that in reality the pursuit of what can be broadly termed Jewish politics proved astonishingly successful in areas far beyond the relatively uncontroversial field of philanthropy. Whether it was due to persuasion or to pressure, to organizations or to individuals, Jews did prove able here and there to influence the decisionmaking process in important ways. Merely to draw up a list of the most striking concessions (won in part or in entirety by Jewish intervention) is enough to make this point.

In August 1915 the Russian government decided, in effect, to abolish the Pale of Settlement, permitting Jews to move freely into urban areas throughout the empire. Again, on the other side of the battle lines, the Ottoman government in Istanbul proved able throughout to impose a measure of restraint on Djemal Pasha who, at times, clearly hoped to use the war situation to destroy the Yishuv as a whole or, minimally, its large pro-Zionist component.¹⁹

Of course, beyond these essentially holding operations, the war opened up unprecedented opportunities to be exploited by the enterprising or the adventurous. Perhaps the clearest example of this was the creation of Jewish units, undisguisedly Zionist in character and goals, within the framework of the British army. In 1915 the Zion Mule Corps played its part in the fighting at Gallipoli, and in 1918 the so-called Jewish Legion fought in Palestine. There were three Jewish battalions: the Royal Fusiliers, made up of six thousand men: recruits from the Russian Jewish population of London's East End; and volunteers from the United States and the Yishuv.²⁰ This achievement, with its clear political implications and enormous risks to the Jewish populations in Ottoman Palestine, resulted primarily from the individual initiative of men such as Joseph Trumpeldor and, above all, Vladimir Jabotinsky – acting in clear defiance of official Zionist policy.

¹⁹ Friedman, *Germany, Turkey and Zionism*, 196–227.

²⁰ On the Mule Corps and the battalions, see Ben-Zion Dinur et al. (eds.), *Sefer toledot bahaganah*, vol. 1, pt. 2 (Tel-Aviv: 1956), 425–532; J. H. Patterson, *With the Zionists in Gallipoli* (London: 1916); *idem*, *With the Judeans in the Palestine Campaign* (London: 1922); Vladimir Jabotinsky, *The Story of the Jewish Legion* (New York: 1945).

For sheer recklessness, though, there was nothing that could compare with Aharon Aaronsohn's decision to organize a pro-British espionage group in Palestine, the Nili, in the hope of advancing the Zionist cause.²¹

The greatest breakthrough achieved by the Zionists – the Balfour Declaration issued in the form of a letter to Lord Rothschild on November 2, 1917 – likewise resulted from informal initiatives taken in contradiction to the express decisions of the world movement. Weizmann, Sokolow, Gaster and the other Zionists who negotiated with the British and French governments over the future of Palestine chose to ignore the official neutrality of the organization, to defy its executive bodies and to risk provoking possible revenge against the Jews (in Galilee, the Jews were still under Turkish rule even at the end of 1917).

Once the war was over, it became much easier, of course, for the major Jewish organizations in Europe and America to work out a common policy to be laid before the peace conference and the League of Nations. Although complete agreement was never achieved (the Alliance Israélite Universelle and the British Conjoint Committee refused to ally formally with the Zionists), there was enough of a united front to permit Louis Marshall of the American Jewish Committee to spearhead a major diplomatic campaign.²²

As a result, safeguards for Jewish minorities were written into the treaties that recognized the newly independent and reconstituted states of East-Central Europe. The Jews there were guaranteed not only full civil but also certain group rights – minimally, in the educational sphere. Marshall could describe the Polish treaty, for example, as “literally a charter of liberty and the final act of emancipation of those who for centuries have been bereft of elementary human rights.”²³ Moreover, beyond this, with the San Remo treaty of 1920, the League of Nations gave formal recognition to the promise that a primary task of the British Mandate was to develop a Jewish national home in Palestine.

Clearly, this series of genuine political achievements stretching from 1915 to 1920 is so out of the ordinary run of things that it almost defies explanation. After all, here was a people whose weakness had been exposed mercilessly by the war – a people lacking both its own state

²¹ For example, Eliezer Livneh, *Nili: toledotehab shel he'azah medinit* (Jerusalem: 1966).

²² See Oscar I. Janowsky, *The Jews and Minority Rights (1898–1919)* (New York: 1933), 264–396.

²³ American Jewish Committee, *Thirteenth Annual Report* (New York: 1919), 21. On the effect of the treaty in Poland, see Ezra Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe Between the Wars* (Bloomington: 1983), 34–36.

and its own territory, with no army to defend itself against constant massacre and with no elected or agreed leadership – a people scattered geographically and fragmented ideologically. Nonetheless, the attempt to explain, if only schematically, cannot be avoided.

Factors of radically different types were clearly involved. First, there was undoubtedly a hard core of strictly rational calculation in the readiness of the belligerent states to try, however sporadically, to win Jewish sympathies to their side. In a prolonged war even the slightest shift of weight can conceivably tip the balance.

Among the vast number of straws, any one of which could finally break the camel's back, two were held in part by Jews – including specifically some Jews ready to defend the interests of the Jewish people as far as they could. International finance and American public opinion were the two areas in which Jews did, undoubtedly, exert a significant influence. The fact that Jacob Schiff and his Kuhn, Loeb bank, for example, had for many years refused to have any part in underwriting loans for the Tsarist government (because of its Judeophobic policies) was undoubtedly a constant source of comfort to the Central Powers and an embarrassment to the Entente Powers.²⁴ True, his refusal to help England raise money in the United States unless it guaranteed that not a cent went to Russia could not prevent the British mission (headed by Lord Reading, Rufus Isaacs, also a Jew be it noted) from raising a \$500 million loan in New York in 1915 with the help of J. P. Morgan – but it made the task somewhat more difficult.²⁵

²⁴ Cyrus Adler, *Jacob H. Schiff: His Life and Letters*, vol. 2 (New York: 1928), 250. In a public speech delivered in June 1916, Schiff said that he had “for twenty-five years singlehandedly struggled against the invasion of the Russian government into American money markets and to this day staved them off” (*ibid.*, p. 302).

²⁵ The Marquess of Reading, *Rufus Isaacs: First Marquess of Reading*, vol. 2, 1914–1935 (London: 1945), 23–50. For two recent works that discuss Schiff's attempts to apply pressure on the Tsarist government before World War I, see Gary D. Best, *To Free a People: American Jewish Leaders and the Jewish Problem in Eastern Europe, 1880–1914* (Westport: 1982); and A. J. Sherman, “German-Jewish Bankers in World Politics – The Financing of the Russo-Japanese War,” *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 28 (1983), 59–73. Sherman concludes, “The case of the Russo-Japanese War financing is the most compelling one we have for an assertion of the solidarity of international Jewish bankers; yet even in this instance, that solidarity was far from monolithic, to Jacob Schiff's intense chagrin” (p. 73). On Schiff, Marshall and others, see also Yehuda Bauer, *The Jewish Emergence from Powerlessness* (Toronto: 1979), “The effectiveness of the Jewish political leadership's quiet diplomacy cannot be denied at least up to a point. . . . Jewish political power, however, was indeed paltry” (p. 58). Although the argument made here by Bauer is generally persuasive, it is also true that the New York Jewish oligarchs – despite and sometimes because of the marginality of their power – could under certain circumstances bring real pressure to bear in both domestic and foreign politics.

Similarly, the fact that America's greatest newspaper, for example, was owned and run by the Sulzberger family made it marginally harder for the Allies in the first year of the war to present the conflict to the public across the Atlantic as a straightforward fight between democracy and reaction. Until 1917 both sides saw in the United States a potential ally in the war, and thus each had no choice but to follow the swings in American public opinion with the greatest anxiety. Studies of the archival material have made it increasingly clear that respect for American Jewry in general and for the Schiffs, the Sulzbergers and their like in particular played a major role in the decision of the Russian government to abolish the Pale of Settlement in 1915; in the German determination to exert constant pressure at the Porte to save the Jewish population in Palestine;²⁶ and in the readiness of the British to allow American supplies for the Yishuv through their naval blockade.

Again, there is no doubt that the ability of the various free-floating Zionist advocates and adventurers to achieve their notable triumphs in the years 1915–17 was also grounded in part on solid fact. Before the war, when Zionist leaders such as Herzl or Wolfsohn had claimed to speak for the Jewish people as a whole, their words had carried little weight. The movement was not large, and after 1903 it appeared to be doing little more than treading water.

But the war did see a huge upsurge in support. The unending stream of news stories about anti-Jewish atrocities in the war zones; the fear that following the war hundreds of thousands, or millions, of unwanted Jewish refugees would flood westward, stoking the fires of antisemitism; the exalted promises of freedom for the small nations of Europe and the Middle East; and the popular assumption that peace would introduce a radically new and better era combined increasingly to make Zionism look no longer a fantasy but rather the height of reason.²⁷

Sensing that a groundswell of support was thus building up, the Zionist movement elevated the "democratization" of Jewish politics to the level of a major slogan and priority. Brandeis was the first to take up this call in 1914. The strategy paid handsome dividends because the Zionist candidates won an overwhelming victory when – despite enormous initial resistance from the "German" Jewish oligarchs, on the one hand, and the

²⁶ For example, Zechlin, *Die deutsche Politik und die Juden*, 350–372.

²⁷ See, for example, Evyatar Friesel, "The Influence of American Zionism on the American Jewish Community, 1900–1950," *American Jewish History* 85 (1985–86), 130–148. Friesel writes, "Twice, during World War I and during and after World War II, American Zionism became the leading force in American Jewry.... Afterwards, American Zionism returned to weakness and disarray" (p. 139).

socialist internationalists, on the other – the elections to an American Jewish Congress were finally held on the basis of one man, one vote. It fell to this congress to select the delegation to go to the Paris peace talks in 1919.

This pattern repeated itself all over Eastern and Central Europe in the years 1917–19 as defeat and revolution swept away the Russian, German and Austrian regimes. Elections to a Jewish National Assembly were held in Russia in December 1917.²⁸ A new Jewish pre-parliament, based on indirect but universal suffrage, met in Kiev a year later to represent Ukrainian Jewry. (Ussishkin and Ahad Ha-Am were among those selected for the peace conference delegation.)²⁹ In Lithuania Jewish national autonomy, complete with a Ministry for Jewish Affairs, was built into the postwar consitutional structure;³⁰ and national assemblies were elected in many areas of what had been the Habsburg Empire (Eastern Galicia, Vienna, Cracow). Even where the demand for such unification was beaten back (as in Congress Poland and Germany),³¹ the Zionists managed to wage a vigorous campaign before going down to defeat. In 1917 those British officials who championed the idea of the Jewish Legion and of the Balfour Declaration saw the evidence of popular support for Zionism in both the United States and Russia as perhaps their most persuasive argument.

However, beyond all such finely balanced appraisals of fact, interest and utility, various forms of mysticism and myth clearly played a central role in shaping official policies toward the Jews. This was most obviously the case, of course, when British politicians or civil servants allowed themselves to be influenced (not always consciously, perhaps) by a romantic view of the Jews as heirs to the Old Testament, or, more specifically still, by millenarian traditions that saw the restoration of the Jewish people

²⁸ Mordecai Altshuler, "Hanisayon leargen kinus klal-yehudi berusiah," *He'Avar* 12 (1965). 75–89.

²⁹ For example, M. Zilberfarb, *Dos yidishe ministerium un di yidishe avtonomye in ukrayne (a bletl geshikhte)* (Kiev: 1919); M. Grosman et al., *Di yidishe avtonomye un der natsyonaler sekreteryat in ukrayne* (Kiev: 1920); and S. I. Goldelman, *Jewish National Autonomy in Ukraine, 1917–1920* (Chicago: 1968).

³⁰ Samuel Gringauz, "Jewish National Autonomy in Lithuania (1918–25)," *Jewish Social Studies* 14 (1952), 225–246; Zvia Balshan, "Maavakam shel yehudei lita 'al zekhuyotei-hem haleumiot 1917–1918," *Shvut* 10 (1984), 62–82; *idem*, "Hamaavak 'al havtahat haavtonomiah haleumit shel yehudei lita behozeh hami'utim halitai uvehukei hamedinah," *Shvut* 11 (1985), 27–43.

³¹ Ezra Mendelsohn, *Zionism in Poland: The Formative Years, 1915–1926* (New Haven: 1981), 91–110; Shlomo Netzer, *Maavak yehudei polin 'al zekhuyotei-hem haetzrahiot vehaleumiot, 1918–1922* (Tel-Aviv: 1980).

to the Holy Land as part of the providential scheme of things and as a necessary prelude to the Second Coming (or Second Advent). If Asquith had not been replaced by Lloyd George as prime minister, there could have been no Balfour Declaration.

Of more universal significance, though, was the mythologizing of Jewish power. The tendency to magnify beyond all the evidence both the influence and the solidarity of the Jewish bankers and newspaper owners – indeed, of the Jewish people as a whole – knew few bounds. Isaiah Friedman, in his two highly informative works on Zionism during the war, collected a plethora of data demonstrating this fact. He quotes Baron Langwerth von Zimmern, one of the highest-ranking intelligence officers in the German army, as writing in 1914 that the Zionist Organization, “completely in German hands and scattered all over enemy countries, can be utilized . . . in a number of ways.” Its members could serve, for example, as “carriers of revolutionary movements, to spread demoralization and organize sabotage.”³² And in 1916 Hugh O’Beirne, high in the British Foreign Office, could write:

[I]f we could offer the Jews an arrangement as to Palestine . . . we might.. conceivably be able to strike a bargain with them as to withdrawing their support from the Young Turk Government which would automatically collapse.³³

From the fact that the leadership group of the Young Turks contained a number of Dunmehs, members of a small Sabbatean-Muslim sect, O’Beirne saw it as mere logic that the regime could survive only as long as the Jewish people saw fit.³⁴

But nothing, perhaps, is as intriguing as the prolonged discussions of the Russian government in August 1915, which stretched over no less than four sessions, on whether or not to permit Jewish residence outside the Pale. And if yes, how? On the one hand, there was a sober recognition that, given the hard facts, it made little sense to maintain the traditional restrictions. Specifically, the army’s chief of staff was refusing

³² Friedman, *Germany, Turkey and Zionism*, 201.

³³ Idem, *The Question of Palestine*, 53.

³⁴ Cf. Elie Kedourie, “Young Turks, Freemasons and Jews,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 7 (1971), 89–104. In this essay Kedourie published a memorandum of 1910 from the British ambassador at the Porte, Sir Gerard Lowther, who wrote, inter alia, “The Young Turk seems to have allied himself solely with the Jew, Ottoman and foreign, and to have estranged other races” (p. 99). Three ministers in the first Young Turk government were of Dunmeh (Dönmen) background; see Gershom Scholem, “The Crypto-Jewish Sect of the Dönneh (Sabbatians) in Turkey” in his *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (New York: 1971), 159.

adamantly to stop the expulsions that constantly augmented the stream of Jewish refugees, thus creating utter chaos in the rear: “It is his plan,” furiously declared the minister of internal affairs, “to maintain the army’s prejudices against all the Jews and to represent them as responsible for the defeats.”³⁵ At the same time, Jewish financiers in England and France were pleading for some humanitarian gesture that would make it easier for them to play their part in underwriting Russian loans.

On the other hand, though, a number of ministers, at least, found it impossible to regard the issue as merely technical. Jewish power, they felt, had chosen the war crisis as the moment to dictate its will to the Russian people. “One cannot conduct a war with Germany and with the Jews” was the way it was put more than once.³⁶ “But what can we do,” asked the interior minister again, “when the knife is at our throat? If the evil influence of the Jews is undebatable... the necessity for money is equally undebatable.”³⁷ And a third minister warned that a “possible consequence of the proposed concession will be an explosion of outrage and bloody catastrophe for these same Jews.”³⁸ The minister of agriculture chose these words to sum up the issue:

In answer... to the Jewish leaders, we must present them an ultimatum no less blunt: we grant you the change in the rules... and you... grant us financial help... and exert influence on that press which is dependent on Jewish capital (and this is nearly all the press) in the sense of changing its revolutionary tone.³⁹

This same idea – that concessions to the Jewish people could somehow halt the revolution in Russia – would, likewise, play a key role two years later, tipping the balance in London in favor of the Balfour Declaration.⁴⁰ Here, again, there was a clear tendency to overestimate vastly both the power and the unity of the Jewish people. The truth of the matter was that in 1917 the Jewish political parties in Russia – (from the Bund, the Fareynikte and the Poale Zion on the left to the General Zionists and Vinaver’s circle on the right) were all fully committed to the cause of a parliamentary regime, and hence to a constituent assembly. They were all

³⁵ Michael Cherniavsky (ed.), *Prologue to Revolution* (Englewood Cliffs: 1967), 57. The minutes of the Council of Ministers (reproduced here in translation) were kept by A. N. Iakhotonov and first published in Berlin in the *Arkhiiv russkoi revoliutsii* in 1926.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 70.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 86.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 62.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 61.

⁴⁰ Cf. Bauer’s summary of this point, “The Balfour Declaration was therefore the result in a large measure of the imagined power of the Jews” (*The Jewish Emergence from Powerlessness*, p. 54); cf. also Chimen Abramsky, *War, Revolution and the Jewish Dilemma* (London: 1975), 12–16.

anti-Bolshevik and came out bitterly against the revolution engineered by Lenin and Trotsky on November 7 (October 25 according to the Russian calendar).⁴¹

But what could these parties do to stem the tide carrying Russia toward the extreme Left? The majority of the prewar Jewish population in the empire was now under German occupation in Poland and Lithuania. In the south the other large concentration of Jews was rapidly being cut off from heartland Russia as the Ukrainian Rada attained growing autonomy. The crucial issues were being decided elsewhere: in the capital cities, in the central industrial areas and in the army.

True, at the hub of events a high percentage of the professional revolutionaries, socialists of various denominations, were of Jewish origin. Some represented Jewish parties; most did not. Some were Bolshevik; most anti-Bolshevik. The Balfour Declaration could make no impact on these circles that (with the exception of the small Poale Zion party) were clearly, often violently, anti-Zionist. But such distinctions were but little understood by the Western diplomats in Russia and still less by the officials in Whitehall (obviously, Weizmann or Sokolow had no cause to disillusion them).

Of course, political attitudes did not long remain frozen in the mold of 1917. The constant changes that, in kaleidoscopic fashion, succeeded each other day by day in Eastern Europe undermined lifelong allegiances and transformed ideas and ideologies. By the end of 1918 there were mounting signs that the frontal opposition of the Jewish socialist parties in Russia and the Ukraine to Bolshevism (or Communism, as it had now become) was beginning to crack.

The failure of the political center to hold, the rapid polarization of forces pulled to the extremes of left and right, the pervasive anarchy, the first pogroms and the danger of far more to come, the collapse of the Hohenzollern and Habsburg regimes and the consequent hope that a radical socialist revolution was about to sweep over the European continent – all undermined faith in the Western system of parliamentary government. The process of erosion in the Bund and the Poale Zion was only slowed down by the aversion within their ranks to a one-party system that demanded of rival movements nothing less than self-liquidation.

⁴¹ On the Jewish political parties in Russia in 1917, see, for example, Arye Gelbard, *Der jüdische Arbeiter-Bund Russlands in Revolutionsjahr 1917* (Vienna: 1982); Yitzhak Maor, *Hatenu'ah haziyonit berusiab: mireshitah ve'ad yamenu* (Jerusalem: 1986), 424–459.

But many members, and then whole factions, went over to Communism in the years 1919-21.⁴²

In the Soviet Union, thereafter, only a tiny Poale Zion party (which saw itself as both Communist and Zionist) was allowed to survive until finally disbanded by the regime in 1928.⁴³ Across the frontier, in the new Polish state, the Bund and Poale Zion maintained their independence, but they saw themselves for the most part as pro-Communist rather than anti-Communist and negotiated (albeit in vain) for admission into the Comintern.⁴⁴

There was, certainly, nothing unusual in this development. The socialist parties in France, Germany and Italy all split in 1920-21, with large sections becoming Communist. And even the parties that remained essentially intact such as Labour in Britain were highly sympathetic to the Soviet regime and bitterly opposed to the Allied support for the White armies.⁴⁵

The difference was that for the Jewish people the stakes turned out to be exceptionally high. The greater the successes of the Communist movement were, the greater the anti-Communist hostility to the Jews became. And the higher the fires of antisemitism raged, the more the Jews on the left came to identify with Soviet Russia. In Eastern Europe this process was accelerated by the tendency of the anti-Bolshevik forces in the Civil War (as already noted) to identify Communism with the Jews and by the (subsequent but not necessarily consequent) horror of the pogroms.⁴⁶

⁴² For the schisms in the Jewish socialist parties, see Zeev Abramovich, *Besherut batenu'ah* (Tel-Aviv: 1965), 180-234; Ben-Zion Dinur, *Biyemei milhamah uma-hapekhhah* (Jerusalem: 1960), 324-365; Zvi Gitelman, *Jewish Nationality and Soviet Politics: The Jewish Sections of the CPSU, 1917-1930* (Princeton: 1972), 151-232; Mordecai Altshuler, *Hayevsektsiyah bivrit hamo'atsot, bein leumiut lekomunizm* (Tel-Aviv: 1981), 18-90.

⁴³ Baruch Gurewitz, "Un Cas de communisme national en l'union soviétique: Le Poale Sion 1918-28," *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique* 15 (1974), 333-371.

⁴⁴ For example, Yaakov Petrazil, *Hamaavak bazirah haproletarit habeinleumit* (1907-1927) (Jerusalem: 1954).

⁴⁵ On the reaction of the Labour party to events in Russia in 1917-21, see S. R. Graubard, *British Labor and the Russian Revolution, 1917-1924* (Cambridge, Mass.: 1956), 44-140.

⁴⁶ Of the White (Volunteer) armies active in the Ukraine in 1919, Kenez writes: In the thousands of reports and documents in the Volunteer archives, one cannot find a single denunciation of pogroms. The agents sending reports to their headquarters simply assumed that Jews were responsible for all miseries: Bolshevism, inflation and lost battles. . . . Secret reports and contemporary correspondence. . . . make it clear that anti-Semitism was neither a peripheral nor an accidental aspect of White ideology: it was a focal point of their worldview (*Civil War in South Russia*, pp. 172, 176).

However, this cycle of hatred and violence, action and reaction, was not confined to Russia and its environs. The hope of one camp that the revolution was about to sweep over Europe became the fear of the other. And the fact that individuals, Jewish by origin although not by allegiance, played so central a role in the Communist leaderships and in the aborted revolutions in Germany (Rosa Luxemburg, Lev Jogiches, Kurt Eisner, Gustav Landauer, Kurt Tucholsky) and in Hungary (Bela Kun, George Lukacs) during late 1918 and early 1919 only served to reinforce the idea that the bacillus of chaos, disruption and dictatorship was carried by the Jewish people as a whole.⁴⁷

Under these circumstances, it was hardly surprising that an editorial in *The Times* (London) could treat *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* as quite possibly authentic. "Have we, by straining every fibre of our national body," it asked bitterly in May 1920, "escaped a 'Pax Germanica' only to fall into a 'Pax Judaica'?"⁴⁸ Nor was it surprising that the *Protocols* now for the first time became a runaway best-seller across Europe or that a great vogue developed for such books as that published in Germany by Alexander Roth, *Judaism and Bolshevism – Disclosures of Jewish Secret Documents: An Exhortation in the Last Hour*. Roth saw all Jews, whether revolutionaries or capitalists, be it a Trotsky or a Rathenau, as working together for the takeover of the world by "Talmudic Jewry."⁴⁹ A recurring anecdote in this genre of literature was that Lenin and the Bolsheviks had been able to sustain themselves through the revolution and the civil war only thanks to the financial support of Jacob Schiff and the Kuhn, Loeb bank.⁵⁰

It was by no means necessary to accept literally the paranoid nightmares conjured up by the *Protocols* for public opinion in both Europe and America to become increasingly suspicious of the Jews. Fierce hostility to further immigration, above all to that of the Jews, now reached unprecedented proportions precisely at a time when the Jewish population of Eastern Europe, left in large part homeless and destitute, was seeking ways to escape.⁵¹

⁴⁷ On the expectations of, and attempts at, Communist and pro-Communist revolutions in Europe in 1918–20, see B. Lazich and M. M. Drachkovitch, *Lenin and the Comintern* (Stanford: 1972), 3–128; and E. H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution*, vol. 3 (London: 1953), 59–228.

⁴⁸ Quoted in Norman Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide* (London: 1967), 78.

⁴⁹ Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers*, 233.

⁵⁰ Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide*, 138.

⁵¹ For an analysis of the impact of the war and of the revolution on popular attitudes in the United States toward immigration, see John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860–1925* (New York: 1966), 194–330. On American

Nonetheless, for all the nightmarish dangers implicit in the tendency of the Jewish Left to move from an anti-Communist to a pro-Communist position, there were, perhaps, still some paradoxical advantages to be gained from it by the men and movements seeking to ensure that the promises made to the Jewish people during the war be kept now that it was over.

In the postwar years of 1919–21, when nobody knew where – if at all – the Red tide would stop, the fear that the younger generation of Jews was about to defect wholesale to Communism was a factor to be conjured with. It gave a Marshall or a Weizmann a powerful argument when demanding full Jewish emancipation in Eastern Europe or the consolidation of a national home in Palestine.⁵² In 1920 Winston Churchill, for example, could argue in all seriousness that Zionism alone stood in the way of the Jewish masses becoming a force for pure evil, the most powerful weapon in the Communist campaign to overthrow Western civilization: “[A]s if the Gospel of Christ and the Gospel of Antichrist were destined to originate among the same people.”⁵³

There is no need to accept such extravagant claims in order to appreciate the fact that Zionism and Communism, Jerusalem and Moscow,

reactions (Jewish and non-Jewish) to these events, see Zosa Szajkowski, *Jews, Wars and Communism*, vol. 1, *The Attitude of American Jews to World War I, the Russian Revolution of 1917 and Communism, 1914–1945* (New York: 1972); *Jews, War and Communism*, vol. 2, *The Impact of the 1919–20 Red Scare on American Jewish Life* (New York: 1974).

⁵² For example, Weizmann in a letter to General Gilbert Clayton wrote, *inter alia*, on November 27, 1918:

The world will never be at peace as long as there are fifteen million intelligent people who have bled in this war as much as anybody else, perhaps even more, and who will be exposed after the war to the same sufferings and humiliations as before. If the Jews are disappointed this time there will be too much bitterness produced in the new world, and instead of making out of the Jews one of the most valuable constructive elements, especially in the Near East, they will be driven into anarchy and Bolshevism (Jehuda Reinharz [ed.], *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann*, vol. 9, [New Brunswick: 1977], 41–42).

⁵³ Quoted in Michael J. Cohen, *Churchill and the Jews* (London: 1985), 55. Churchill’s article was published in the *Illustrated Sunday Herald* (8 February 1920). I am most grateful to Sharman Kadish, who first drew my attention to this article. For a very important recent study on the Jewish question as perceived in postwar England that throws much light on the complex sources of gentile Zionism at the time, see Shmuel Almog, “Hitpathutah shel hasheelah hayehudit beangliyah betom milhemet ha’olam harishonah,” *Zion* 50 (1985), 397–431. See also Bryan Cheyette’s most illuminating “Jewish Stereotypes in English Fiction and Society, 1875–1914” (Ph.D. diss., Sheffield University, 1986).

really were in direct competition for the allegiance of the Jewish youth in Eastern Europe. And Zionism was able, in the wake of the devastation, to exert a strong counterpull of its own – not by rejecting Communism lock, stock and barrel, but rather by adopting much of its radical worldview.

Certainly, the great outpouring of young men and women coming to Palestine from Russia and Poland in the years 1919–23, the Third Aliyah, demonstrated once again – as in the post-1905 period – how much the Zionist movement could gain from the potent synthesis of socialism and nationalism. The many thousands of pioneers who had lived through the Russian Revolution and Civil War were convinced that the national home could only be built on fully socialist foundations. Without their numbers and dedication, the miniscule labor movement in Palestine would have withered on the vine.

Their Zionism, indeed, divided them from the Communist movement and kept them out of the Comintern. But the quasi-messianic spirit that sustained them through their early years in Palestine was drawn not only from Jewish tradition but also from the example of total social change they had just witnessed in Lenin's Russia.⁵⁴

Conclusion

The First World War brought to an end a hundred-year period that, in retrospect, can be seen as something of a golden age in the history of the Jewish people. Prolonged internal peace and economic growth (barely touched by the few localized wars) had permitted the population in Eastern Europe to increase many times over. Liberal immigration laws had made it possible, in turn, for millions of Jews to find new homes overseas. Everywhere in Europe and the Western world – with the major exception of Russia and, in effect, Romania – Jews were granted equal rights before the law. Of course, this period also witnessed the emergence of Judeophobia in new, modern forms, but the specifically antisemitic parties in Germany and Austria showed signs of decline in the decade before the war; and even in Russia the Beilis trial of 1913 witnessed mass demonstrations in his favor and his eventual acquittal by the jury.

⁵⁴ On the Third Aliyah and its place in the politics of the labor movement in Palestine, see, for example, Yosef Gorny, *Aḥdut ha'avodah*, 1919–30: *hayesodot hara'ayoniim vehashitah hamedinit* (Tel-Aviv: 1973); Yonatan Shapira, *Aḥdut ha'avodah bahistorit: 'ozmato shel irgun politi* (Tel-Aviv: 1975); Elkana Margalit, *Avtonomiah shel smol: po'ale zion smol beerez yisrael (1919–1946)* (Tel-Aviv: 1976); *idem*, *Komunah, ḥevrah upolitikah: gedud ha'avodah 'al shem Yosef Trumpeldor beerez yisrael* (Tel-Aviv: 1980).

But Jewish life was disrupted utterly by the war. Death and destitution carved a wide swath through East European Jewry. Accused en bloc first of disloyalty and then of Bolshevism, the Jews found themselves at the mercy of whichever armed unit was in occupation at the moment. After the war these accusations tended to stick; antisemitism reached unprecedented proportions. At the same time the old escape routes to the New World were being closed. Hitler began to write *Mein Kampf* while in prison in 1924; in the same year the new immigration law went into force in the United States.

Yet, it was generally assumed by 1921 that for the Jewish people the catastrophe lay behind, not ahead. Peace was being restored; the League of Nations was in place. The Jews were guaranteed their rights in the new states by treaty, and their physical safety (if not their freedom) was assured in the Soviet Union. Herbert Samuel was high commissioner in Palestine, assigned the task of presiding over the construction of the Jewish National Home.

Belief in Jewish power, exaggerated to the level of myth, had permitted Jewish organizations and advocates to intervene at crucial moments and at the highest government levels to prevent still-worse disasters during the war – and to win grandiose promises with regard to the future. Few realized just how much this myth, albeit a source of political strength, was still more – given the essential weakness it disguised – a source of danger without limit.

PART THREE

IDEOLOGICAL CONFLICT AND CONTINUITY

The Socialist Opposition to Zionism in Historical Perspective

The attitude toward Zionism of the established socialist movement on the eve of the First World War can be summed up in two words: complete rejection. At the very well attended congresses of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party held in Stockholm and London in the years 1906–07 and attended, inter alia, by the Polish and Lithuanian parties as well as by the Jewish Bund, there was not a single Zionist to be found. The Second International, then at the height of its prestige, contemptuously dismissed the requests of the Poale Zion party to join its ranks. Of course, among those participating in the congresses of the Second International were many Jews, including representatives of Jewish parties – specifically, delegates of the Bund who formed part of the Russian Social Democratic faction, and of the Sejmist party (otherwise known as the SERP), which found a place in the Socialist Revolutionary delegation – but Zionist parties were explicitly excluded.¹ The key argument underpinning this policy of rejection was consistent and repetitive: Zionism, by its very essence, served the forces of reaction in the Jewish world. And as for socialist Zionism, whatever the subjective intentions of its adherents, it was objectively a contradiction in terms, a grotesque caricature of genuine socialism.

However, it would be erroneous to assume that there was a simple uniformity in the attacks on Zionism launched from the Left. The contrary was the case. Different camps and individuals associated with the Second

¹ See, e.g., E. Mendelsohn, “The Jewish Socialist Movement and the Second International, 1889–1914: The Struggle for Recognition,” *Jewish Social Studies*, vol. 26, no. 3 (1964), pp. 131–41.

An earlier and different version of this article appeared in Hebrew in H. Avni and G. Shimoni (eds.) *Haziyonut vemitnagdebah be'am hayhudi: kovez maamarim* (Jerusalem, 1990), pp. 147–160.

International started from often radically different premises. Thus, the great majority in the movement totally rejected the very concept of Jewish nationalism and saw in Zionism simply an extreme example of the pathological nature of that nationalism.

For the most part, the leaders of the International in its classical period were dedicated “internationalists” and Marxists – often self-defined as Orthodox Marxists – and as such tended to regard any and every kind of nationalism in negative terms. Their essentially exclusive commitment was, of course, to proletarian solidarity and to the class war on a world-wide scale – factors that in their eyes had to override national divisions and conflicts. It was for this reason that the encounter between Georgii Plekhanov of the Russian party and Katayama Sen, the Japanese, at the Congress of the International in Amsterdam in 1904 took on such symbolic significance and was greeted so emotionally – at the height of the Russo-Japanese war, at the international gathering of the world’s workers, the two leaders embraced, declaring themselves “brothers in arms”: arms to be directed not against each other but against the entire capitalist order.²

But the belief in this shared and high ideal did not mean that most Marxist strategists believed that it was possible simply to ignore, dismiss, or oppose nationalism and nationalist movements. There were very few leaders, for example, who shared Rosa Luxemburg’s refusal to support the demand for the liberation and reunification of Poland (then divided among Russia, Austro-Hungary, and Germany). In fact, the PPS (the Polish Socialist Party), which dedicated itself primarily to the revolutionary struggle for Polish independence and sovereignty, was a full member-party in the Second International. And over Rosa Luxemburg’s vociferous opposition, the congress of the International in 1896 specifically declared its recognition of the right of nations to “self-determination.”³

But even if most of the “internationalists” recognized nationalism as one of the facts of life and granted that there was no choice but to compromise with it in order to mobilize the immense forces needed to bring down the established order (above all, Russian tsarism), this in no way meant that they believed it necessary or right to reconcile themselves to the demands of nationalities that were politically weak and insignificant. After all, they maintained that in the long run the conflicts and tensions dividing nations would decrease and – in the socialist era – even disappear

² S. W. Baron, *Plekhanov: The Father of Russian Marxism* (Stanford, 1963), p. 262.

³ On Rosa Luxemburg and Polish nationalism, see J. L. Talmon, *The Myth of the Nation and the Vision of Revolution* (London, 1981), pp. 124–30 (cf. pp. 216–34); and J. P. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg* (London, 1966), vol. 1, pp. 63–71; vol. 2, pp. 842–62.

altogether. It would then be illogical to hinder in any way the normal socioeconomic trends bringing about the submergence and assimilation of minor nationalities. And this logic was doubly binding when applied to those ethnic groups that for one reason or another were dispersed and without their own territorial base. The Jews clearly fell into this category, having left their historic homeland, now a remote corner of the Ottoman empire, in the distant past, almost two thousand years before.

It was in this context that the Jewish issue took on such symbolic importance in the eyes of the Marxist leadership; it was a test case of the first order. If even a group of this type (scattered, urban, increasingly proletarian, open to acculturation) were to maintain a separate national identity in the rapidly changing modern world, how could one possibly expect the homogenization of more rooted nationalities still living in their own homelands (Czechs, Slovaks, Slovenes, Ukrainians, for example)? The mainstream socialist elites then had every reason to insist that the Jews were a mere caste or sect that had lost the essential characteristics of a nationality or nation in the remote past. Had not Karl Marx, at a very early stage, in his famous or notorious essay of 1843, "On the Jewish Question," maintained that the stage of "social" – that is, full and final – emancipation would bring with it the true liberation of the Jews and their merger into the surrounding society? The Jews, insisted Marx, had preserved their separate existence thanks to the fact that they fulfilled distinctive economic functions; the Jewish religion served simply to lend an aura of sanctity to crude material realities. Complete assimilation would, therefore, inevitably follow once the exploitation of man by man was abolished, and once the Jews found themselves an integral part of a labor force based on the principle of equality.⁴

However, the opposition to Zionism was not confined to the "internationalist" camp alone, but was shared by many of the Jewish nationalist groups and parties; they started out from entirely different premises. Thus, for example, the Bund at its Fourth Congress in Belostok in 1901 declared the Jews to be, in fact, a nation and as such entitled to national autonomy in the post-revolutionary, democratic era; but at the very same congress it was decided to expel from the party anybody supporting Zionism.⁵ And the Bund was by no means exceptional in its synthesis of Jewish nationalism, socialism, and anti-Zionism. Two other parties – the Zionist Socialist

⁴ See, e.g., J. Carlebach, *Karl Marx and the Radical Critique of Judaism* (London, 1978); and J. Jacobs, *On Socialists and the Jewish Question after Marx* (New York, 1992).

⁵ H. J. Tobias, *The Jewish Bund from its Origins to 1905* (Stanford, 1972), p. 129.

Labour party (or the SSRP)⁶ and the Jewish Socialist Labour party (the Sejmists or the SERP) – combined these same three planks in their platforms, going beyond the Bund in their nationalism and, at times, in the vigor of their anti-Zionist campaigning.

The deep division between the socialists who supported and those who negated Jewish nationalism produced some paradoxical results. Thus, the more the Bundists, for example, came under attack from the “internationalists,” the more they in turn stepped up their public criticism of Zionism, in general, and of left-wing Zionism, in particular. Nothing was more irritating to the Bund than Plekhanov’s witticism of 1905 – which thereafter became widely known – that the Bundists were simply “Zionists who are afraid of sea-sickness.”⁷ This jibe was first made in an interview granted by Plekhanov to the young Zionist journalist and politician Vladimir Jabotinsky, who, for his part, described in no less ironic terms the chain reaction produced by the attacks moving from Left to Right, from the “internationalists” against the “nationalists” (or, as he described it, from the top downward): “Whoever is familiar,” he wrote,

with our proletarian stream cannot but be aware of the well-defined, almost hierarchical, order of ranks. . . . Every party is eager to justify itself in the eyes of the next one up, which is comparatively less heretical. In such circumstances, it does not hesitate to use exaggerated rhetoric, making a very simple and honourable calculation: the more you revile your neighbour standing beneath you, the more you will prove your orthodoxy to your neighbour above.⁸

These dynamics clearly worked in the most negative way against Zionism. The Jewish socialist parties – the Bund, the SSRP, and the Sejmists – nationalist themselves, were determined to prove their loyalty to the proletarian International by marking themselves off in demonstrative fashion from the Zionists. In this respect, there was no significant difference between Vladimir Medem and Noah Portnoi of the Bund, Moyshe Litvakov and Zvi Abrahams of the SSRP, or Moyshe Zilberfarb and Yehude Novakovskii of the SERP. Together with Kautsky and Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg and Lev Davidovich Trotsky, they too rejected Zionism, but there was one difference: they invested much greater time and effort to marking themselves off from the Zionists and from the Zionist ideology.

⁶ The SSRP, founded in 1905, was from the first a Territorialist party; it kept the name “Zionist” in order to emphasize its historic links with the movement established by Theodor Herzl in 1897 and its support for Herzl’s East Africa project.

⁷ V. Zhabotinskii [Jabotinsky], “Nabroski bez zaglavich; beseda s G. V. Plekhanovym,” *Khronika evreiskoi zhizni*, nos. 41–2 (October 28, 1905), p. 31.

⁸ Idem, “Pole ‘brani,’ ” *Khronika evreiskoi zhizni*, no. 50 (December 30, 1905), p. 5.

Hostility from the Jewish Left had accompanied Zionism – or more exactly, proto-Zionism – almost from the days of its first emergence. Thus, a number of the basic arguments that made themselves heard during the 1905 revolution and were endlessly repeated until the fall of the Soviet empire in 1991 had already been spelled out by the Jewish revolutionary Ilya Rubanovich in his article of 1886, “What Should the Russian Jews Do?”

Thus, he there maintained that the Jewish people, who had lived dispersed for almost two thousand years, would hardly be able to make the extraordinary effort and sacrifice required to bring the plans of Hibat Zion to reality. Or, in his words:

It is not possible to breathe the spirit of patriotism into the heart of the people artificially! A [political] program brings together and sets in order real and pre-existing aspirations; it cannot just create them! But the *Palestintsy* [the proto-Zionists] are actually trying to create reality by means of a program.⁹

No little space in Rubanovich’s article was assigned, too, to the question of the Arabs:

What is Palestine? It is a country which belongs to the Turkish empire and is settled by Arabs. . . . Let us suppose that “our” financial royalty were actually to buy our “historic homeland”: what should then be done with the Arabs? Will the Jews really agree to be aliens living among the Arabs or will they seek to turn the Arabs into aliens living among the Jews? Mr. Lilienblum says that “we have a historical right to Palestine.” . . . A historical right! . . . And by what means will you defend that historical right? . . . The Arabs have exactly the same historical right. Woe unto you if – under the protection of international bandits and by the manipulation of international intrigue and corrupt diplomacy – you force the peaceful Arabs to defend their rights. They will answer tears with blood and will bury your hereditary claims under the ashes of your homes.¹⁰

In the last resort, argued Rubanovich, there was only one solution to the Jewish question – the social revolution, which would put an end to exploitation and discrimination. So, for example, the future socialist regime should settle the poverty-stricken Jewish masses as farmers on those vast areas of land in Russian possession that were still unexploited. (Rubanovich, as a *narodnik*, naturally thought in terms of agrarian socialism.)

⁹ I. Iliashevich [Rubanovich], “Chto delat’ evreiam v Rossii,” *Vestnik narodnoi voli*, no. 5 (1886), p. 113.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 112, 113.

Four of the key themes thus developed by Rubanovich in the mid-1880s would be employed time and again by the Left over the coming century and more. First, Zionism represented an extreme case of “utopianism,” that is, an inability or a refusal to recognize those limitations that reality, hard facts, places in the way of the political will. Second, it was compelled to put excessive reliance on historic rights as opposed to claims based on solid ethnic and demographic facts. Third, in seeking to exploit great power rivalries for its own ends, the proto-Zionist movement was choosing to ignore the fact that the European states were outdoing each other in their eagerness to exploit ruthlessly the peoples of Asia and Africa. (Rubanovich did not use the terms that would become standard after the First World War – “imperialism” and the “anti-imperialist” struggle – but the same line of thought was already in place.) And, finally, the Hibat Zion movement, or the *Palestintsy*, was actively diverting, or seeking to divert, the Jewish masses from their only source of real hope – the revolutionary movement that was making such enormous sacrifices to bring about fundamental change in their entire political and social order, not in some far-off corner of the world, but in the here and now.

And Rubanovich was not even the first. Earlier still, at the height of the emigration debate that followed in the wake of the pogroms of 1881–82, a number of Jewish *intelligenty* had raised still other issues that similarly would become the stock-in-trade of the anti-Zionist case on the Left. So, for example, Ludwig Zamenhof (today best known as the inventor of Esperanto) had then argued that to settle the Jews in their ancestral homeland, Eretz Yisrael, would serve inevitably to strengthen the forces of reaction and to undermine the forces of progress in the Jewish world. The growth of the Jewish population in Palestine would bring with it increasingly vociferous demands to rebuild the Temple and to renew animal sacrifice. “On the chaos that will reign in Eretz Yisrael on the day of its liberation,” he wrote, “one could write entire books.”¹¹ Zamenhof’s answer, of course, was that the Jews should seek out some new region of the world for their settlement projects – a region where it would be possible to attain a just balance between tradition and modernity, between the old and the new. This theme would be much repeated after the turn of the century by the Territorialist camp and particularly by its socialist wing.

And in 1883, Eliyohu Volf Rabinovich (together with Morris Vinchovskii, a pioneer of the Yiddish press, particularly of its left-wing

¹¹ Gamzefon [L. Zamenhof], “Chto-zhe nakonets delat?,” *Razsvet*, no. 4 (January 22, 1882), p. 133.

variety) touched on yet another subject that would become familiar in later years. "Can we," he asked, "really appeal to Jews suffering from poverty; take them away from their parents and from their loved ones and send them to a country desolate and destroyed... when we know that they will not be able to reap what they have sown in tears... Our free-thinking class of exploiters, who will make their way there, too, will make no distinction between one people and another, between one faith and the next, and will not ask their victim as they skin him alive to which motherland or to which religion he belongs."¹² The idea here expressed – that the economic exploitation of the Jewish masses would be no less, and perhaps even more severe in Palestine than elsewhere – would be taken up time and again in the future.

The truth is, in fact, that essentially no arguments, not already heard in the 1880s, were added to the anti-Zionist arsenal thereafter. The backdrop to the attacks, of course, changed according to time and place: once, it was Herzl's meeting of 1903 with Viacheslav von Plehve, the tsarist minister of the interior, who was held responsible for the Kishinev pogrom earlier in the year; then it was the Balfour Declaration, which tied the fate of the Zionist enterprise inextricably to that of the British empire; and yet again, it was the Arab riots and Hebron massacre of 1929, when it was maintained that Zionism, whether deliberately or not, was clearly leading the Jewish masses in Palestine to disaster, to a blood-soaked and hopeless collision with an Arab liberation movement that was inevitably gaining ever more support.

The transformation of the anti-Zionist phenomenon at the turn of the century was, then, not so much qualitative as quantitative. In the years 1901–14, the Bund greatly increased its propaganda and agitation against the Zionist movement,¹³ and it remained staunchly anti-Zionist after the First World War, too. (Even when the party was dispersed by the Bolshevik regime in 1921, it continued to exist – and in the 1930s even to flourish – in independent Poland.)¹⁴ During certain periods, 1901–06, for instance, a flood of articles and booklets devoted to this theme

¹² In A. A. Droujanoff [Druianov], *Ktavim letoledot hibat-ziyon veyishuv erez-yisrael*, vol. 3 (Tel-Aviv, 1932), p. 559 (originally published in *Hamagid*, no. 20 [1883], supplement).

¹³ Tobias, *The Jewish Bund*, pp. 128–9, 160–76.

¹⁴ See, e.g., Y. S. [J. S.] Hertz et al. (eds.), *Di geshikhte fun Bund*, vols. 4–5 (New York, 1972–81); J. Marcus, *Social and Political History of the Jews in Poland, 1919–39* (Berlin, 1983), pp. 280–4; B. K. Johnpoll, *The Politics of Futility: The General Jewish Workers Bund of Poland 1917–1943* (Ithaca, N. Y., 1967); and A. Brumberg, "The Bund and the Polish Socialist Party in the Late 1930's," in Y. Gutman et al. (eds.), *The Jews of Poland Between Two World Wars* (Hanover, N. H., 1989), pp. 75–94.

flowed from the presses of the movement. The socialist Territorialists and Autonomists – the SSRP and SERP (which joined together in 1917 to form the United party, the Vereynikte) – could not compete with the Bund in matters of size and organization, and hence their output of agitational literature was far smaller, but they too stepped up the flow of their anti-Zionist publications when they grew in strength during the revolution of 1905–07.

What specific factors motivated these socialist parties, with their powerful sense of Jewish nationalism, to mark themselves off so sharply from the Zionist idea and movement? Mention has, of course, already been made of the “ladder” effect (to recall Jabotinsky’s metaphor): it was the Orthodox “internationalist” establishment that set the tone for the entire socialist movement; and, for all their profound ideological differences, all the Jewish socialist parties hoped ultimately to win recognition from the Plekhanovs and the Kautskys.

But it would be erroneous to ignore other, and sometimes more tangible, considerations. The fact is that the Bund, the SSRP, and the Sejmists saw themselves as being in direct competition with Zionism for public support. The Zionist organization, founded by Theodor Herzl, a charismatic leader, and even the earlier Hibat Zion movement, established formally in 1884, were both able to exert a powerful pull on the young and deeply alienated Jewish intelligentsia in the tsarist empire. However, it was this same intelligentsia that served as the major recruiting ground for the leadership cadres – the officer corps, as it were – of the Jewish socialist parties. Moreover, as the Poale Zion movement (the labor and socialist wing of the Zionist organization) gained in strength during the early years of the century, it also entered into bitter competition for the support of the Jewish proletariat. Not surprisingly, therefore, many of the articles and booklets against Zionism produced by the Bund were directed specifically against the socialist and proletarian pretensions of its Left wing.

And the syndrome repeated itself with the emergence of the Territorialist movement in 1904–06. Ber Borochov, the Marxist Zionist (or *Palestinets*), faced no more severe critic than Nahum Syrkin when the latter was in his socialist-Territorialist phase. Following the crisis over the Uganda project and the subsequent establishment of the Jewish Territorial Organization (ITO) under the leadership of Israel Zangwill, Syrkin came to see Borochov’s stubborn loyalty to Palestine as a betrayal of all that was essential, all that was holy, in Jewish socialism and in Jewish nationalism – the commitment to rescue the Jewish masses from their

bitter fate in Eastern Europe and to transfer them with all possible speed to some immediately accessible and suitable territory, regardless of historical loyalties and political romanticism.¹⁵

When all this has been said, though, it is still hardly enough to explain the profound antipathy, even outright hatred, nursed by many (although by no means all) Bundists towards Zionism. In order to understand that, still another factor has to be brought into the equation. Bundists were deeply antagonized by the Zionist attitude to anti-Semitism – an attitude that they tended to regard as unforgivable. As interpreted by Lilienblum, Pinsker, Herzl, and their disciples, Judaeophobia and anti-Semitism resulted inevitably from the aberrant sociopolitical situation of the Jews – a national minority nowhere at home, without their own fatherland, guests who sooner or later inevitably outlived their welcome, the natural objects of envy, suspicion, and downright fear. The process of democratization gaining ground in the modern era would not transform this rock-bottom fact, but, on the contrary, would only serve (as Lilienblum argued with exceptional cogency) to aggravate it. There was, they insisted, only one way out: the return to the ancestral homeland and the transformation of Palestine once again into a Jewish territory or even state.

However, this theory that analyzed the persistence and strength of anti-Semitism in terms of predetermined sociohistorical laws was seen by many, probably most, Bundists as nothing other than a repellent acquiescence in, and passive acceptance of, the forces of evil. In their eyes, anti-Semitism was the product of political factors, of reactionary regimes, of feudal and petit-bourgeois groups, which could be, and had to be, challenged, fought head on, and defeated. The international socialist movement was leading the war, and every true socialist had to take his place in the ranks. The Jewish workers, and the Jewish people as a whole, had a direct interest in that struggle, which, with victory, would bring the downfall of tsarism in Russia, and of reaction and interethnic conflict throughout Europe. The battle was taking place day by day in the Pale of Settlement, in every town and shtetl, here and now.

The Bundists saw the Zionist plan, or promise, to transfer the Jewish masses to a secure homeland in the Middle East as either naïve fantasy or downright deception, for, after all, in every single year the Jewish population in Europe grew in numbers larger than the whole new Yishuv

¹⁵ J. Frankel, "Ber Borokhov and the Revolutionary Generation of 1905," in G. Wigoder (ed.), *Contemporary Jewry: Studies in Honor of Moshe Davis* (Jerusalem, 1984), pp. 217–34.

built up over an entire generation (1881–1903). A political program so divorced from reality could only do harm and, in subjective terms, constituted nothing if not collaboration with the enemy.

Nor could one ignore the fact that the Zionists and the anti-Semites spoke the same language. They both declared the Jews to be “aliens” and “foreigners” in the land of their birth, and they both called on the Jews to flee their homes, using the same slogan: “Go to Palestine!” It was thus only logical that Herzl should have sought to recruit the support of von Plehve after Kishinev (promising the Russian minister to try to turn back the revolutionary tide among the Jewish youth); or that Daniil Pasmanik had sought an agreement with Petliura during the Civil War, despite the unprecedented pogroms; or that Jabotinsky had negotiated with the reactionary Polish government in the late 1930s when he was talking, without any realistic basis, of “evacuating” Polish Jewry – an idea, of course, on which both sides could easily and fully agree. And all these theatrical encounters, devoid of any substance, took place at times when the Bund was involved in a bitter struggle against those same anti-Semitic regimes, with thousands of their members imprisoned, with many young lives cut short; and when it was in alliance with other socialist parties (Russian, Polish, Lithuanian) that, at least in good part, rejected anti-Semitism as a blight on their countries.

In the last resort, then, an unbridgeable gap divided the Zionist from the Bundist camp; there could be no escaping the mutual enmity and even hatred.

During the seventy years and more of the Bolshevik regime in Soviet Russia (from 1924 until 1991, the USSR) and during the over forty years of Communist rule in Eastern Europe, the anti-Zionist themes developed before the First World War became a standard part of the official lexicon, regurgitated in endless agitational campaigns. And the Soviet regime, for the most part, went to considerable pains to stress the theme of continuity. With the establishment in 1983, for example, of the Soviet Anti-Zionist Committee (ASKO), great care was taken to ensure that Jews (General David Dragunsky, Samuel Zivs) would be prominently placed among its leadership – the goal being, of course, to stress that (possible appearances to the contrary) the organization was not anti-Semitic but simply pursuing traditional Marxist and “internationalist” policies.¹⁶

¹⁶ T. H. Friedgut, “Soviet Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism: Another Cycle” (The Soviet and East European Research Center, The Hebrew University: Research Paper No. 54) (Jerusalem, 1984).

Nevertheless, it remains a fact that the character of the anti-Zionist campaigns in the Communist world did undergo a number of radical transformations between the period of Lenin and that of Gorbachev. In the years 1920–21, with the final victory of the Red Army in the Civil War, the Jewish socialist parties were forced to disband, and many of their ex-members chose to join the *Evseksiia* (the Jewish section of the Communist Party). They then had no choice but to give up their open support for full-fledged Jewish nationalism and to fall back on vague and ambiguous formulations regarding the future of the Jewish people¹⁷ (formulae reminiscent of Vladimir Medem's famous principle of "neutrality," from 1904, which stated that a Marxist party such as the Bund could not encourage Jewish national survival, but should nonetheless support the provision of those minimal conditions required for its continued existence; it should be left to history, the laws of socioeconomic development, to decide the ultimate outcome).

None of this, however, brought with it any reduction in the traditional enmity for Zionism of the one-time Bundists, the *Sejmists*, or the socialist Territorialists, and they remained committed to the idea of active anti-Zionist agitation. Thus, the 1920s witnessed a new type of amalgam. The cadres of the *Evseksiia* contributed to the campaigns against Zionism the zeal and fighting spirit from their pre-Bolshevik days; while the "internationalist" and Orthodox camp now backed up words with action, bringing into play the machinery of the state complete with the arrest, imprisonment, and penal exile of Zionists. It is reasonable to assume that if it had not been for the active role played by the veterans of the Jewish socialist parties (traditionally anti-Bolshevik in the extreme) the anti-Zionist theme would have attracted much less attention during the early years of the new regime.¹⁸

In this context, it is sufficient to recall one significant episode. At the Second Congress of the Comintern held in 1920, Lenin presented a list of theses dealing with the "colonial" (or anti-imperialist) question. Not surprisingly, the list, which was formulated in macrocosmic terms embracing much of the world's land mass, made no mention of Zionism (then still a microcosmic question, if ever there was one). But at that point, Ester Frumkina took to the floor to demand that a clause concerning Zionism explicitly be included among the theses. In 1920 Frumkina was still a

¹⁷ For example, Merezhin's speech of 1926 (*Pervyi vsesoiuznyi sezd 'Ozet'v Moskve*, 15–20 noiabria 1926 g. [Moscow, 1927], pp. 82–5).

¹⁸ On the development of the *Evseksiia*, see Z. Gitelman, *Jewish Nationality and Soviet Politics: The Jewish Section of the CPSU 1917–1930* (Princeton, 1972); and M. Altshuler, *Hayevsekziyah bevrit hamoezot 1918–1930 bein leumiyut lekomunizm* (Tel-Aviv, 1981).

member of the Kombund (the Communist Bund), a party that had been formed as a halfway house, no longer the Bund in its traditional form but still organizationally outside the Russian Communist party; in the following year, it declared its own dissolution, and Frumkina with the rest of the leadership group entered the Evseksiia. Her amendment was accepted and was publicized worldwide as an integral part of one of the most important documents ever issued by the Comintern.¹⁹

The Evseksiia was closed down in 1930, and the involvement of the Communists in the Jewish sphere (especially with regard to Yiddish literature and culture) was brought to a tragic end in Stalin's last years (1948–53). Subsequent attempts to put the shattered pieces together again proved to be half-hearted and largely ineffective. Under these circumstances, it would have been logical to expect that anti-Zionist propaganda would go into sharp decline. And the truth is that during the period between Stalin's death in 1953 and the June war of 1967, little space was devoted to the Zionist theme in Soviet publications.

However, over the subsequent twenty years – the twilight of the Soviet empire – this trend was dramatically reversed, with anti-Zionist campaigns at times taking on truly mammoth proportions. This volte-face is to be explained (or so all the available evidence suggests) as a direct reaction to the reemergence in the USSR of overt forms of Zionist organization and activity, on the one hand, and to the worldwide movement in support of Soviet Jewry, on the other. To maintain the policy of public silence in the face of this dual but interlocking challenge was no longer considered possible.

Through the haze of crudity and confusion that enveloped the anti-Zionist propaganda of the late Soviet period, the observer could still discover three distinct traditions. First, there were the themes familiar from the lexicon of “internationalist” Marxism, most frequently represented by references to, and quotations from, Lenin; second, there were the arguments once employed by the Bundists and other Jewish socialists, but now trotted out mechanically and without the inner conviction of the earlier period; and finally, also thrown into this brew, were accusations and incitement strongly reminiscent of classical Russian anti-Semitism at its most brutal (here, the influence of Stalin's last years was strongly felt). Typical in this respect were the many attempts made to equate Zionism with Nazism and to lay the blame for the Holocaust in one way or another

¹⁹ J. Degras (ed.), *The Communist International 1919–1934: Documents*, vol. 1 (London, 1956), p. 144.

on the Zionists.²⁰ (What a striking example there was here of the irony of history: the new world and the new man, created with such initially high hopes by the Bolsheviks, had ended up employing the vocabulary used by the proto-fascist Union of the Russian People during the period 1905–14.)

Yet, when all this has been said, care still has to be taken not to draw too one-dimensional a picture of Bolshevik attitudes to Jewish nationalism, in general, and to Zionism in particular. After all, Lenin always insisted that nationalism and national movements were forces too powerful to be simply opposed or brushed aside. He disagreed absolutely with those of his party comrades who believed that the era of true internationalism was near and that it was possible to consider the imminent abolition of states and merger of nationalities. On the contrary, for the foreseeable future, it was essential to decide policy toward any given state or nation on an ad hoc, strictly utilitarian basis – with the yardstick being the interest of the proletariat (or, realistically speaking, of the proletarian party) in the class war.

So the Bolsheviks could declare their support for the right of nations to self-determination and, at the same time, invade the Ukraine, Poland, and Georgia in the attempt to annex them to the Soviet state. Until the First World War, the Bolshevik party was vociferously opposed to the federal principle, and yet in the years 1918–24 it created its new state as a federation of national republics. Lenin and his followers had no difficulty in explaining these apparent contradictions; after all, a slogan suited to the capitalist or bourgeois period of history was not necessarily applicable to the proletarian or socialist era nor, for that matter, to the complicated time of transition from the one epoch to another. In this “theory of stages” was to be found the ideological key to every conjuncture and every zig-zag.

It is, then, in no way surprising to find the Communists in the 1920s encouraging the development of Jewish education and culture in the Yiddish language; nor to find that many saw in this phenomenon a latter-day triumph of Bundist ideology, albeit without the Bund and in somewhat modified form. Similarly, the projects to settle Jews en masse in farming colonies in the Crimea and Birobijan were frequently perceived as a

²⁰ J. Frankel, “The Soviet Regime and Anti-Zionism: An Analysis,” in Y. Ro’i and A. Becker (eds.), *Jewish Culture and Identity in the Soviet Union* (New York, 1991), pp. 310–54.

victory for the Territorialist ideology, albeit now on Communist foundations.²¹

Even the Zionist movement, and institutions, were able at times to benefit from the utilitarian approach of the Soviet regime. And in this context, it is worth recalling that, at least until 1917, and even afterward, Zionism was perceived as a most marginal phenomenon by the Bolshevik party. What induced Lenin and Stalin to devote so much attention to the Jewish question was the struggle not against the Zionists, but against the Bund, which formed a unit within the Russian Social Democratic Labor party, thus challenging Bolshevik ideology and hegemony from within. Zionism was mentioned as an extreme example of what the Jewish separation and heretical ideology of the Bund could lead to if it were not stopped in its tracks. Herein, perhaps, lies the secret of the fact, on the surface incomprehensible, that the Poale Zion party was permitted to exist as a legal entity in the Soviet Union up until 1928²² – while (as already mentioned) the Bund was outlawed at the same time as the Menshevik party, the SRs, and the general Zionist movement in the years 1920–21. The organization of the Zionist pioneer youth, Hehalutz, together with its agricultural training farms, was also permitted to operate, despite frequent arrests and other forms of obstruction, throughout the period of the NEP – and many of its members were allowed to leave for Palestine throughout the 1920s.²³

On the face of it, it was hardly logical to insist that it was the Evseksiia that fuelled the anti-Zionist policies in the Soviet Union over and beyond the general line pursued by the Communist leadership – a view of things strongly expressed, for example, by David Ben Gurion during and after his long Russian stay of 1923.²⁴ However, while the Evseksiia doubtless worked only within the general parameters of party policy and ideology, it is also true that the old enmities carried with them an added emotional charge within the Jewish world.

In the last resort, after all, Stalin did decide in the years 1947–48 to provide the Yishuv with massive diplomatic and military support – aid that measured by any standards can only be regarded as of crucial importance in the creation and survival of the Jewish state. Diplomatic

²¹ See, e.g., H. Smoler, *Heikhan ata haver Sidorov?* (Tel-Aviv, 1973), p. 94.

²² B. Gurevitz, "Un cas de communisme national en Union soviétique: le Poale Zion 1918–1928," *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique*, vol. 15 (Paris, 1974), pp. 333–71.

²³ For example, D. Pines, *Hehalutz bekur hamahapekhah: korot histadrut behalutz berusiyah* (Tel-Aviv, 1936).

²⁴ D. Ben Gurion, *Zikhronot*, vol. 1 (Tel-Aviv, 1971), pp. 220–64.

relations between Israel and the Communist bloc (Rumania excluded) were broken off in 1967, and thereafter violent anti-Zionism raged in the Soviet press, but this did not prevent the Brezhnev regime from opening the gates during the 1970s to an exodus of some quarter of a million Jews headed for that very pariah state.

With that, though, it should be noted that the Communist movement (in this respect no different from the Second International before 1914) never showed itself willing to compromise with Zionism on the strictly ideological level. The movement could, as noted, tolerate the existence of Zionist organizations from time to time; and it could even lend the Zionist enterprise concrete support on a pragmatic basis. But it was not by chance that Gromyko and Tsarapkin in their dramatic speeches at the United Nations in 1947 did not refer to Zionism or the Zionist idea, but rather to the sufferings and claims of the Jewish people. The term "Zionism" thus retained its strictly pejorative connotations throughout the entire seventy and more years of Communist rule in Moscow.²⁵

At this point, another and most significant aspect of the subject demands consideration. During the First World War and in the wake of the October revolution, the world socialist movement splintered into rival and bitterly divided factions that eventually, in the latter half of the 1920s, consolidated themselves into two rival camps: the Communists, represented by the Comintern (the Third International), and the moderate (Social Democratic) parties that united in the now restructured Second International. The deeper and more permanent the division, the less the anti-Communist bloc felt itself bound by the traditional dogmas of Marxist "internationalism" and orthodoxy. There thus opened up new, unprecedented opportunities, permitting Zionism and Zionist organizations to gain a hearing from within one mainstream movement (even while still shut out of the other).

The first, remarkable evidence of these changing realities was the decision of the Dutch-Scandinavian Bureau of the International, under the direction of Camille Huysmans, to express its support for the memorandum submitted to it by the World Union of Poale Zion in 1917.²⁶ With

²⁵ On Israeli-Soviet relations, see, e.g., Y. Ro'i, *Soviet Decision-Making in Practice: The USSR and Israel 1947-1954* (New Brunswick, 1980); and U. Bialer, *Between East and West: Israel's Foreign Policy Orientation 1948-1956* (Cambridge, 1990).

²⁶ See, e.g., Y. Petrazil (ed.), *Hama'avak bazirah haproletarit habeinleumit (1907-1927)* (Jerusalem, 1954), pp. 40-53; and M. Mintz, *Zemanim hadashim, zemirot hadashot: Ber Borochov 1914-1917* (Tel-Aviv, 1988), pp. 303-21.

the benefit of hindsight, this extraordinary and almost inexplicable move can be understood as a sign of things to come. The increasing alienation from Bolshevism, on the one hand, and the consolidation of the Jewish labor movement in Palestine, on the other, made it possible for Zionism to win a measure of recognition, legitimacy, if not from the Second International as a whole, then at least from important subsections within it. The Poale Zion movement was actually accepted as a constituent subsection of the Labour party in Great Britain.²⁷

This process made itself felt, *inter alia*, in the Jewish labor movement, particularly in the United States. Until 1914, the leadership of the Jewish Left in America had been drawn from two different sources: the founding fathers, who in many cases had arrived in the 1880s and who tended to follow the classic “internationalist” (or “cosmopolitan”) line of thought, denying the legitimacy of Jewish nationalism in any shape or form; and, second, veterans of the Bund who had left the tsarist empire after 1905 and saw no contradiction between socialism and Diaspora nationalism. The relationship between the two groups was complex, often tense, but they could unite around one cause at least: outright opposition to the Zionists.

However, during the 1920s, when the Jewish Socialist Federation (made up largely of ex-Bundists) moved over toward Communism and when the Communist movement made a concerted effort to take over the great “Jewish” trade unions (the ILGWU, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers), it proved impossible to retain the united front against Zionism. Prominent figures in the veteran group – Abe Cahan (editor of the powerful Yiddish daily the *Forverts*), Max Pine (the trade unionist and leader of the United Hebrew Trades), and Avrom Lesin (the well-known Yiddish journalist and poet) – edged their way toward a rapprochement not with the World Zionist Organization *per se* but with the labor movement in Palestine: the Histadrut, the *kibbutzim*, the *moshavim*. Increasingly during the 1920s, fund raisers and spokesmen sent over by the Histadrut found themselves welcomed in labor and socialist circles way beyond the narrow confines of the Poale Zion. The threat from Communism on the Left had necessitated breaching the wall raised against Zionism on the right.²⁸

²⁷ G. Shimoni, “Poale Zion: A Zionist Transplant in Britain (1905–1945),” *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, no. 2 (1986) (ed. P. Medding), pp. 227–72.

²⁸ M. Epstein, *Jewish Labor in the USA: An Industrial, Political and Cultural History of the Jewish Labor Movement* (New York, 1969), 2 vols.; idem, *The Jews and Communism* (New York, 1959); A. Liebman, *Jews and the Left* (New York, 1979); D. Prudson, “Hakomunizm vetnu’at hapo’alim hayehudit bearzot habrit 1919–1929” (Ph.D.

All in all, then, the relationship between Zionism and the anti-Zionist Left was too multilayered and complex to be described simply in dichotomous terms. The fact is that over the years something of a continuum formed itself between the two poles. Or (to switch metaphors) the lines between the two warring camps lost their clear definition, leaving between them a no-man's-land.

The reference here is not primarily to the desertion of individuals, groups, or entire parties from one side to another, even though that was a significant phenomenon in its own right. Thus among the stratum of "autodidacts (*polu-intelligenty*) in the Vilna group of Social Democrats that created the Bund in 1897 were a number of important figures such as Avrom Amsterdam and Khatskl Usyshkin who had previously been members of Hibat-Zion; and in the Second Aliya mention can be made of Yehezkel and Sarah Khenkin and Yosef Haim Brenner, all of whom had been active in the Bund – Brenner had even edited the party paper, *Der Kampf*, in Homel. For their part, Berl Katznelson and Avraham Hartzfeld had been socialist Territorialists during the Russian revolution of 1905. In the interwar period, a large number of members left the Poale Zion and Hashomer Hatzair in order to join the Communist movement, and among them were those who rose up through the ranks to serve as leaders of state in various Eastern European countries after 1945.

Of more relevance here, though, were those activists and ideologues who found it hard, or simply refused, to decide in favor of one side or the other. An early example was provided by Moses Hess, who, after the publication of his remarkable proto-Zionist work, *Rome and Jerusalem*, renewed an active role in the German socialist movement and (as an ally of Lassalle and Marx) in the First International. His plans for a Jewish Palestine were there regarded variously with contempt or amusement, but he was not deterred, choosing to be both a Jewish nationalist and a German socialist at one and the same time. During the years 1903–09, Nahman Syrkin, the socialist Zionist, became the militant Territorialist, only to then return to Poale Zion, but his thinking remained broadly consistent throughout: the goal had to be the concentration of as large a number of Jews as possible in the most suitable available territory with all possible speed – and the creation there of a state both Jewish and socialist. Haim Zhitlovsky was always the advocate of socialist autonomism for the Jews even as he deserted his acerbic anti-Zionism of the 1890s, to

dissertation, Tel-Aviv University, 1985); and T. Tadmor-Shimony, "Sheelat hazeihut haleumit shel hasozializm hayehudi haamerikani 1917–1924," (Ph.D. dissertation, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1995).

become an active supporter of Poale Zion before and during the First World War and then, in the 1920s, a vocal champion of the Communist cause in Soviet Russia.

No less striking were the constant efforts made over the years to bridge the gap dividing socialist Zionism from revolutionary Marxism – and, after 1917, from Communism. On the Zionist Left, the hope never died that somehow the hostility of the Second International (up until 1914) and later of the Comintern was based less on principle than on a simple lack of knowledge or, perhaps, on deliberate misinformation fed by hostile Jewish groups such as the Bund or the Evseksiia – hence, a hostility that could be reversed.

On frequent occasions, leading figures of the Second or Third Aliya chose to stress the overlap between their own plans and between developments in the established socialist or Communist camp. So, for example, such spokesmen for the right wing of Poale Zion as Syrkin, Ben Gurion, and Tabenkin, while not identifying themselves completely with the Soviet regime, nonetheless expressed their admiration for the constructivist enthusiasm and innovative daring that they discerned in War Communism. The grandiose plans characteristic of the Third Aliya – the “single commune” (*hakommunah haklalit*) advocated by the Gedud Haavodah; an economy run by and for labor (*meshek haovdim; bevrat haovdim*) – clearly reflected a high degree of identification with the early Communist experiments.²⁹

That the common ideas, combined with tangible common interests, would lead eventually to cooperation between Soviet Russia and the socialist Yishuv was almost an article of faith with many. During his stay in Russia in 1923 Ben Gurion retained the conviction that the gap between the two sides would inevitably narrow. And in 1926 an attempt was even made by a group within the Gedud Haavodah, directed by Israel Shokhat, to persuade the Soviet regime to support the construction of an armed force (complete with aircraft) in the Yishuv – the final aim, of course, being the expulsion of the British from Palestine.³⁰

The attempts to create an organic synthesis between Marxism and Zionism on the ideological plane also attracted a great, and more or less

²⁹ See, e.g., A. Shapira, “Hasmol begedud ha'avodah vехаPKP 'ad 1928,” *Haziyonuth*, no. 2 (1971), pp. 148–68; E. Margalit, *Kommunah, bevrat vepolitika: gedud ha'avodah 'al shem Yosef Trumpeldor beerez-yisrael* (Tel-Aviv: 1980); and Z. Zahor, *Bederekh lebanhagat hayishuv: habistadrut bereishitah* (Jerusalem, 1982).

³⁰ S. Shva, *Shevet hano'azim: korot manya veyisrael shohat vehaverim beha“shomer”* (Merhavia, 1969); Y. Slutsky, *Mihaganah lema'avak. Sefer toldot hahaganah*, part 2, vol. 1 (Tel-Aviv, 1960), pp. 234–6; and Y. Goldshtein, *Bederekh el haya'ad: “Bar Giora” ve“Hashomer” 1907–35* (Tel-Aviv, 1994), pp. 101–31.

continual, effort over many decades (from the turn of the century until at least the 1970s). In this area, Ber Borochov's famous essay of 1906, "Our Platform," became a locus classicus, a "guide to the perplexed," for two generations or more of his disciples.³¹ Borochov's determination to portray Zionism as a reflection of deep-running socioeconomic processes, of historical inevitability, made his work (republished in innumerable editions in many languages) a source of constant attraction to those Zionists who insisted on identifying themselves as loyal to the world of revolution.³² If Zionism was bound to triumph as the result of inexorable and objective developments, then the socialist wing of the movement was free to concentrate all or most of its efforts on the class war in Palestine and the Diaspora alike.

At the time of its composition, "Our Platform" was a response to the strong leftward wave that swept the Poale Zion along with it in 1905 and to the determination of the party rank-and-file to participate in the revolution as full equals. At that time, Poale Zion, together with the other Jewish socialist parties, adopted the most radical positions, in effect moving to support Bolshevik rather than Menshevik tactics. Thus, for example, it supported the Moscow uprising of December 1905 and the boycott of the elections to the First Duma. And a few years later, the Russian Poale Zion party, under Borochov's leadership, decided to boycott the World Zionist Congress, and that policy became a hallmark of the movement's left wing until the 1930s. Following the October revolution, the post of People's Commissar for Jewish Affairs was offered to Nahum Nir of Poale Zion;³³ and in the years 1920–22, the World Union of left-wing Poale Zion made enormous efforts to gain membership in the Comintern.

At times, the Marxist radicalism of the Poale Zion party even made possible cooperation with the Bund (a priori an all but unimaginable development). During the revolutionary years early in the century, there were instances of a common front formed to combat pogroms (the defense put up against the pogrom in Homel in September 1903 involved units from both parties). And in interwar Poland, there was cooperation between the two movements in the establishment of a joint school network (Tsisho) that had as its aim the encouragement of a radical, national culture and ethos in the Yiddish language. The enormous financial and organizational effort involved in this highly ambitious undertaking did not

³¹ "Nasha platforma," *Evreiskaia rabochaia khronika*, nos. 1–3 (1906) and *Molot*, no. 2 (1906).

³² For example, E. Margalit, *Anatomiya shel smol: po'alei ziyon smol berezyisrael* 1919–46 (Tel-Aviv, 1976).

³³ A. Nir [Rafalkes], *Pirkei hayim: bema'agelei hador vehatenu'ah* (Tel-Aviv, 1958).

permit the Bund to persist in its traditional policy of totally boycotting everything that smacked of Zionism, however otherwise revolutionary and Marxist.

Borochovism, in its different variations, provided the ideological underpinning not only for the left wing of Poale Zion, but also for the Socialist Labor Party (MoPS), founded in Palestine in 1919, and for the Palestinian Communist Party (PKP) in its early years, until 1924. Similarly, Hashomer Hazair, in its increasingly desperate quest for a firm faith, ended up in the late 1920s with the Borochovist version of Marxism; and Mapam, in opposition to Ben Gurion's leadership following the creation of Israel in 1948, was drawn by the same logic and in the same direction. Thus, paradoxically (or, perhaps, "dialectically"), the Zionist enterprise drew strength and sustenance from Marxist-Leninist messianism even though the Communist and fellow-travelling world regarded its anti-Zionism as nothing less than an article of faith.

The history of the Communist movement (or, more exactly, movements) in Palestine provides a fascinating example of the high tension produced by the attempts to create a political force on the border between Zionism and the radical anti-Zionist Left. As noted, the Palestinian Communist Party initially defined its strategy in Borochovist terms and constituted an integral part of the left-wing Union of Poale Zion (which termed itself "Communist" during that period). It was only in 1924, having agreed to cut all its ties with Poale Zion, that the party was permitted to join the Comintern. And, henceforward, the PKP sought persistently to form an alliance with the Arab national movement, which it held to be a significant factor – potentially, at least – in the anti-imperialist struggle. As a result, the party was expelled from the Histadrut in 1924.³⁴

In general, it had positioned itself in an agonizingly difficult situation: a party composed primarily of Jewish members, an integral part of the Yishuv, had taken upon itself to foster Arab forces in opposition to the Mandatory power and to the Zionist endeavor. Not surprisingly, perhaps, the PKP was plagued by ideological "deviations" that were condemned by the Comintern and other official Communist bodies as pro-Zionist.³⁵ Thus, Moscow condemned the party for its decision to

³⁴ G. Yisraeli [Z. Laqueur], *Mops, PKP, Maki - korot hamiflagah hakomunistit beyisrael* (Tel-Aviv, 1953); S. Dothan, *Adumim: hamiflagah hakomunistit beerez yisrael* (Kefar Saba, 1991); and J. Hen-Tov, *Communism and Zionism in Palestine: The Comintern and the Political Unrest in the 1920's* (Cambridge, Mass., 1974).

³⁵ N. List, "Zadak hakomintern . . .," *Keshet*, vol. 5 (1963), pp. 133–48, 153–71.

label the Arab riots of 1929 as a “pogrom,” rather than as a revolutionary uprising. And, following the Seventh Congress of the Comintern in 1935, a Jewish Section formed in the party began calling for the creation of a Popular Front within the Yishuv (a policy that, of course, could hardly be reconciled with active support for revolutionary Arab nationalism). In the 1940s, another and similar group, the Hebrew Communists, splintered away; and in the 1960s, the party (now the Israeli Communist Party, Maki) split in two, with Rakach (the New Communist List) drawing its support almost entirely from the Arab electorate and with Moshe Sneh’s party (Maki) appealing to the left-wing Jewish vote.³⁶

The complexity and paradoxality of this phenomenon did not cease even there, however. During the 1970s and 1980s, Rakach, which in Israeli eyes was generally regarded as nothing more than a pawn of Moscow, appeared on the pages of *Pravda* – through party resolutions and statements – as pro-Israeli, almost pro-Zionist, particularly in comparison to the other relevant material published by the Soviet press.

The collapse of the Communist system in Eastern Europe and the disintegration of the Soviet Union in the years 1989–91 is often described today as the concluding chapter in the long confrontation between Zionism and the anti-Zionist Left. The hundred years’ war for the soul of the Jewish people that reached a new level of visibility in November 1917 – with the Balfour Declaration, on the one hand, and the Bolshevik revolution, on the other, – had ended, it is said, in the decisive victory of Jerusalem over Moscow. While statues erected by the Communists were being toppled and street names being changed in the vast territories between Berlin and Vladivostok, the exodus of Jews from the Soviet lands, which had started during the Brezhnev period, reached flood proportions. All in all, between 1989 and 1996, some nine hundred thousand people abandoned what was to have been the Communist utopia in order to settle in the Jewish state; and still they keep coming.

Every Zionist and everybody who supports Israel’s survival can only be thankful that events developed as they did and not in some opposite direction – the Soviet bloc, after all, supplied the Arab states with massive military aid over a period of forty years in pursuit of its anti-imperialist policies.

³⁶ S. Dothan, “Reshito shel komunizm leumi yehudi beerez yisrael,” *Haziyonut*, vol. 2 (Tel-Aviv, 1971), pp. 208–36.

But this is not, in reality, a subject that lends itself well to a triumphalist approach on the Zionist side. From the first (that is, as we have seen, from the early 1880s), the two camps developed their own utopian and quasi-messianic myths: the Zionists were committed to the evacuation of the Jews from Europe (the “ingathering of the exiles”), the Left to a world of equality and fraternity, to a world reborn out of revolution. What this meant was that each camp became expert in discerning the weaknesses and absurdities inherent in the political program of the other, while remaining incapable of seeing, let alone admitting, those in its own.

Zionists and Territorialists (including many but by no means all the socialists among them) – starting with Moses Hess – had no difficulty in arguing that nationalism and profoundly rooted interethnic differences had an autonomous life of their own and were no mere epiphenomena reflecting divergent class interests. It is one of the ironies of Bolshevik history that the federal republics established after the revolution to neutralize and overcome nascent nationalist aspirations have ended up today as no less than fifteen independent – for the most part, fiercely independent – states, successors to the tsarist and Communist empires.

At the same time, though, there can be no denying that the attacks from the Left, starting in the 1880s, were often firmly grounded in reality, effective in exposing weaknesses inherent in Zionism (and proto-Zionism) and frequently most prescient. Israel has developed, and is developing still more, as a capitalist country with a widening gap between the rich and the poor. It has (albeit belatedly) witnessed a powerful resurgence of Ultra-Orthodox Judaism, thus threatening to bring on that *Kulturkampf* that Zamenhof predicted in 1882. And, of course, the country has – as Rubanovich darkly forewarned – been forced to fight off the fiercest Arab opposition, waging in its very short history no less than seven wars.

But it was in the demographic sphere that the critics on the Left proved themselves to a great extent, and tragically, to have had truth on their side. By 1939, the Jewish population in Palestine numbered less than half a million, while there were over ten million Jews in Europe and some eighteen million worldwide. The gap between the goal – defined by Lilienblum in 1881 as “the evacuation of the Jews from Europe” – and the reality, had not been significantly narrowed over the intervening sixty years. And in the titanic struggle that then ensued during the Second World War, it was the Red Army under the ultimate command of Joseph Stalin that remained the only force strong enough to defeat the

Wehrmacht, so saving the Jews in Europe – and indirectly in Palestine – from complete annihilation.

Of course, not all Zionists had believed that the movement was capable of resettling the great mass of Jews in Palestine. At a very early stage, Ahad Haam had argued that Zionism was there to provide the Jewish people with a new form of national cohesion in a secular age rather than to solve its socioeconomic and political problems. But that was the voice of a minority, radically opposed to the vision shared by Lilienblum and Pinsker, Herzl and Ussyshkin, Jabotinsky and Ben Gurion.

Like all such national myths, that of the “ingathering of the exiles” (*kibbutz galuyot*), an emotional term replete with biblical resonance and the “negation of the Exile” (*shlilat hagalat*), undoubtedly served initially to inspire and deepen faith, to consolidate the ranks. But in the long run it proved increasingly harmful and even dangerous. Such was its hold on the collective psyche that it infinitely complicated the tasks of politicians seeking to follow a pragmatic path in moments of crisis – at the time of the partition debate in 1937, for example, or following the war of 1967.

It is not, of course, the purpose of this paper to discuss the schism that has come to divide the Israeli body politic since 1967, with the minimalists accusing the Greater Israel camp of enslavement to myth and messianism; and with the maximalists charging the other side of deserting the most fundamental values of Zionism – such, indeed, as the belief in the need to attain territory sufficient to absorb the great mass of Jews at some future time. But it is worth noting here that the deep political divisions of the present have increasingly encouraged radical reappraisals of the past, as the previously established and hegemonic historiography has come under ever more critical scrutiny from both the maximalists and the minimalists.

One of the more ironic results has been that many of the themes familiar from the ideological repertoire of the anti-Zionist Left, which is now to all intents and purposes defunct, have been finding their way into the new – so-called “post-Zionist” – historiography. Thus, from within the Israeli scholarly community, it is possible to gain the impression that Zionism was essentially a “colonialist” movement modelled in no small part on the policies directed against the Poles by Wilhelmine Germany; that the labor leadership of the Yishuv was committed throughout to the idea of creating not a socialist but a capitalist society; that a deep-rooted, contempt for the mass of Diaspora Jews inhibited the development of

rescue schemes during the Holocaust; that exploitative considerations similarly influenced the Zionist treatment of the survivors after the war; and that the leadership of the Yishuv chose to forego possible chances to achieve peace in the 1950s.³⁷

Given the prolonged period of division within the country, this development is in no way surprising. But it nonetheless behooves us today, one hundred years on – actually nearer to one hundred and twenty years – to remember that the Zionists saw one great truth that their critics to the Left preferred to brush aside: in an age of mounting and ever more militant nationalism, life would be made increasingly intolerable for the Jewish minority. At such a time, the only rational response was for the Jews to create their own nationalist movement, complete with all the accompanying – and apparently unavoidable – myths and myth making.

³⁷ On the new trends in Israeli historiography sometimes loosely linked together under the title of “post-Zionism” see the special issues of *History and Memory*, vol. 7, no. 1 (1991): *Israeli Historiography Revisited*; and *‘lyunim betekumat yisrael: Ziyonut (Pulmus ben zmaneinu)* (Sede Boquer, 1996).

PART FOUR

OVERSEAS

The “Yizkor” Book of 1911

A Note on National Myths in the Second Aliya

How nationalistic did the labor movement founded by the young Jewish immigrants to Palestine (the Second Aliya, as it is often called) become during its first decade, 1904–1914? This is a question of great importance in the history of Zionism.

After all, the small remnant of the Second Aliya which was still in Palestine in the early 1920s succeeded to a remarkable extent in stamping its mark on the fast-growing Jewish population, organizationally (through the Histadrut, the Hagana, the kibbutzim, the moshavim); ideologically (with its concept of labor hegemony); and culturally (with its strongly secular but also strongly national ethos). Veterans of the Second Aliya attained positions of political dominance both in Palestinian Jewry (the *Yishuv*) and in the World Zionist Organization from the 1930s. At critical moments – in 1937 (at the time of the Peel Commission), in 1947–49 (when the Jewish State was created amidst turmoil and battle) and in 1967 (following the June War) – a crucial role was played by leaders who had arrived as very young men even before 1914. Some, Berl Katznelson and Levi Eshkol, for example, were at the center of affairs during only one of these crises; but others (most notably, Yitzhak Tabenkin and David Ben Gurion) were, astonishingly, on the public stage during all three.

However, it is enough to mention these few names in order to recall that among them they held totally conflicting views on such fundamental issues

First published in Hedva Ben Israel and others (eds.), *Religion, Ideology and Nationalism in Europe and America* (Jerusalem, 1986), pp. 355–83. In preparing this essay I benefited very much from conversations on the subject with colleagues and friends at the Hebrew University: Menachem Brinker, Hannan Hever and Shmuel Werses. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their generous advice (though, of course, responsibility for the contents and for any possible errors is entirely my own).

as the partition of the Land of Israel, or, for example, military retaliation against Arab violence (the correct balance to be struck between *havlaga*, restraint, and “activism”). And to a large extent, these divisions can be traced back to the period before the First World War.

As a safe generalization, it can be said that, in great part, those members of the Second Aliya who were still in Palestine in 1914 were imbued with a strong and palpable spirit of nationalism. But when it comes to describing the nature of that nationalism, the historian finds himself face to face with patterns kaleidoscopic in their complexity and elusiveness. The fast-changing and inchoate development of the Second Aliya during its first decade made not only for disagreements between various groups and between various individuals, but, frequently, also for a lack of consistency on the part of one and the same person.

True, at one level, the politics of the Second Aliya can be seen as unfolding along lines familiar from Russia during the years of the revolutionary upheaval and the pogroms, 1903–7. There were the two Zionist labor parties, both established in Palestine late in 1905 by veterans of party organization in the Pale of Settlement, one socialist (the Jewish Social Democratic Labor Party in Palestine – Poale Zion); the other radical (Ha-Poel Ha-Tsair). They had their party programs, annual conferences, and resolutions; their conflicts and debates, often highly acrimonious. In theory, it was their task to formulate the ideologies which had to extrapolate long-term political strategy and day-to-day tactics from an over-arching world-view.¹

But in reality, the bold experiments, which eventually proved to be of decisive importance in the development of the labor movement, were initiated for the most part without help from the parties or, even, in contradiction to their avowed principles. This was true of the first tentative move towards cooperative farming by the workers (Ein Ganim); of the first steps towards collective settlement (the Sejera *kolektif* and Um Juni); and of the Farm Labor Unions. It was also true of the para-military organizations, Bar Giora, founded in 1907, and the Ha-Shomer, founded in 1909. The parties had not been responsible for bringing the young immigrants to Palestine; could do little to help them once they had come; and lacked the financial and organizational means to impose their leadership. As often as not, they had to adapt their ideological formulations to

¹ For semi-official histories of the labor parties during the Second Aliya see, e.g. Y. Ben Zvi, *Poale tsiyon ba-aliya ha-shniya* (Tel Aviv, 1950); Y. Shapira, *Ha-poel ha-tsair: ha-rayon ve-hamaase* (Tel Aviv, 1968).

accommodate the new policies developed by groups over which they had, at most, only nominal control.²

Again, while each party founded its own journal, neither forced its contributors to follow its own line of thought. On the contrary, *Ha-ahdut*, and still more, *Ha-poel ha-tsair*, reflected in their pages the highly individualistic, disorganized and even anarchic nature of the Second Aliya.

The limited role played by the parties meant that the actual attitudes and behavior of the young immigrants can hardly be described or explained in ideological terms alone. The ways in which they acted and thought were often more the result of deep emotions aroused by their experiences in revolutionary Russia and in the Palestinian colonies than of logical deductions from theoretical premises.³

And here, too, the party ideologists found themselves talking ever more frequently not in the language of cool analysis and socio-political strategy but rather in that of national and religious traditions (albeit reworked to meet current needs). National legends and myths, with their appeal to the group psyche, the collective subconscious, were conjured up to inspire the faith and tenacity which the imported ideologies had been able to sustain only in part and only by dint of frequent (and hence costly) adaptation.

The importance of the *Yizkor* (or memorial) book published in 1911 lies in the fact that nowhere else, perhaps, is it possible to observe in so concentrated a manner, the process by which members of the Second Aliya were developing ways of thought and speech suffused with mythological motifs. The decision to publish an entire volume on the death of men, very few in number but all killed in combat by Arabs, almost all in their first youth, provided an ideal forum for those who felt driven at that time to create a pantheon of heroes, or perhaps a martyrology, for the movement. Inevitably, the enterprise aroused the strongest possible emotions and called forth a broad range of reactions, both ideological and personal, involving different views of the past, the present and the future of the Jewish people.

² On ideological adaptation during the Second Aliya, e.g. Y. Kolatt, "Ideologya u-metsiut bi-tnuat ha-avoda be-erets yisrael," Ph.D. thesis (The Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1964); Anita Shapira, *Berl Katsnelson* I (Tel Aviv, 1981), pp. 45-95. (Cf. J. Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism and the Russian Jews 1862-1917*, Cambridge, 1981, pp. 366-452.)

³ For a rare insight into the extreme psychological strain to which the pioneers were often subject, see Aliza Zhidlovsky, "Hevle klita," in B. Habas, ed., *Ha-aliya ha-shniya* (Tel Aviv, 1947), pp. 554-58.

It was Yehoshua Radler-Feldman (better known by his *nom de plume* Rabi Binyamin) who first conceived the idea of the memorial volume. He had been abroad, in Galicia, when three young men, Dov, or Berele, Shveiger, Shimon Melamed, and Yisrael Korngold were killed in the spring of 1909 as the result of attacks by Arab villagers in Lower Galilee. But he had known Shveiger for some years before that, even before the latter had become a full-time guard, and he greatly admired him. He had personally witnessed how Shveiger, although still a youngster not out of his teens, had been put in command of Mesha (Kfar Tabor) in 1908 when it was in threat of a major assault from the surrounding population, and how he had handled this assignment with a calm confidence.⁴

Shveiger had died of wounds in the Scottish hospital in Tiberias and had been given little more than a pauper's burial by the local Jewish community. And on his return to Palestine, Radler-Feldman undertook to produce a commemorative book in order, as he put it, to compensate for the absence of a suitable memorial stone.⁵

There was no reason when the *Yizkor* book was first planned to have expected it to produce any controversy within the labor movement. It was conceived as a personal tribute more than a political statement. If Radler-Feldman had any political message in mind then it was directed against the passivity and ultra-conservatism of the so-called Old *Yishuv* (pre- and mainly anti-Zionist) as represented by the Jews of Tiberias.

When Shveiger and his comrades were killed early in 1909, almost no questions had yet been raised in the labor movement about what was, or was not, the correct role to be filled by those workers who chose to earn their living as paid guards in the Jewish colonies. That work in the colonies (whether farm labor or guarding) should be undertaken increasingly not by Arabs (or Circassians) but by Jews had come to be regarded by the Second Aliya as essential and beyond dispute. As a result, when the watchmen established their own organization, Ha-Shomer, in the spring of 1909, it at first attracted almost nothing except admiration not only from Poale Zion (from which its members were mainly drawn) but even

⁴ On the crisis at Mesha: M.T., "Khronika: mi-mesha," *Ha-poel ha-tsair*, nos. 10–11 (Tamuz–Av 5668/July–August 1908), p. 26. (Rabi Binyamin was employed in the administration of the Kinneret training farm at the time and was among those who went to join the defense of Mesha. He added a note to M.T.'s article calling on the workers in Judea to find jobs in Galilee, thus reinforcing the small and beleaguered Jewish labor camp there.)

⁵ R. Binyamin, "Al-odot 'yizkor,'" *Ha-poel ha-tsair*, no. 8 (24 January 1912), p. 12.

from Ha-Poel Ha-Tsair.⁶ That a memorial volume should have been built around Dov Shveiger (termed the "first Jewish guard" in the colonies of Galilee) was natural enough.

The task of editing the volume was taken upon themselves by two of the best-known writers and intellectual figures associated with the Second Aliya, Alexander Ziskind Rabinovich and Yosef Haim Brenner. As the former had ties to Poale Zion and its new journal, *Ha-ahdut*, and as the latter then published articles regularly in *Ha-poel ha-tsair*, their joint editorship served to emphasize the non-partisan nature of the enterprise.

They made no attempt to limit the kind of contributions which could be offered, and opened up the volume to Hebrew writers both in the country and abroad as well as to the "young people here in Eretz Yisrael who for the most part were the comrades of our holy fallen [*harugenu ha-kdoshim*]." The volume *Yizkor*, was to be dedicated not only to Shveiger, Korngold and Melamed but, in general, to "the workers and guards who have been killed guarding the Jewish colonies in our country."⁷ In March 1911 an advertisement was published in the press calling for contributions and this was followed up by another, more urgent one, in May.⁸ In that same month, we find Rabinovich and Brenner jointly writing to Micha Yosef Berdichevsky in Germany, thanking him for the short tales which he had sent for the volume.⁹

However, the book which had been conceived in a spirit of consensus in 1909 did not see the light of day until the very end of 1911 when, in

⁶ E.g. Yosef Aharonovich wrote in 1910 with clear reference to the *shomrim*: "Only the worker who says (to use the words spoken by a Jewish worker in Galilee) – 'If my rifle were taken from me in an attack, proving me incapable of guarding our property here in Eretz Yisrael, I would commit suicide' – is capable of guarding our property and the honor of the nation." "Le-inyanei ha-shaa," *Ha-poel ha-tsair*, no. 19 (27 July 1910), p. 4. A report from Hadera in *Ha-poel ha-tsair* described enthusiastically the arrival of Ha-Shomer in the colony and a typical member as "covered from head to foot with ammunition – and there is pride on his face: the pride of the man whose work as guard is honorable and is executed faithfully." Ben-Yona, "Mikhtav me-hadera," *ibid.*, no. 22, 4 September, 1910, p. 14.

But an early sign of doubt at this time can be seen in the refusal by Yitshak Vilkansky, the manager of the Bet Arif farm (but also associated with Ha-Poel Ha-Tsair) to permit the workers to take on the armed guard of the crops, reportedly declaring: "This is not Galilee! You don't need weapons here. This is none of your business." "Mikhtavim la-maarekhet," *ibid.*, p. 16.

⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 11 (13 March 1911), p. 16.

⁸ "Al-odot 'yizkor'," *ibid.*, no. 16 (26 May 1911), p. 19.

⁹ 12 May 1911, in the Brenner papers, Archive and Museum of the Jewish Labour Movement (Tel Aviv) (henceforth AMJLM) IV/104/74.

fact, it served to highlight deep disagreements within the Second Aliya about both the rhetoric and the substance of Jewish nationalism and of Jewish-Arab relations. Even before the book was published, Brenner had resigned as co-editor. What is more, he chose to withdraw his contribution to *Yizkor* and to publish it as an article in *Ha-poel ha-tsair*, adding a note in which he explained his action quite specifically as the result of “disagreements between me and Mr. A.Z. Rabinovich.”¹⁰ And no sooner had the book appeared than Zerubavel (Yaakov Vitkin) brought out a major article in *Ha-ahdut* attacking a number of contributions, and indeed the whole structure of the book (to which he himself had contributed) in bitter terms. In turn, Rabinovich and Radler-Feldman defended the volume (and themselves) publicly, the former in reply to Brenner, the latter in answer to Zerubavel.

Of course, much of the material which went into the making of *Yizkor* was politically uncontroversial. Many of the Hebrew authors sent in pieces of work which they had, from all appearances, been in the process of writing (or had earlier completed) anyway. Here, for example, Agnon first published his tale drawn from the folk life of Galician Jewry, “The Wood Cutter.” A. Reuveni (Aharon Shimshelevich) and Shlomo Tsemakh both contributed stories, permeated by a strong note of pastoralism, about the day-to-day and peaceful life of the farm workers, young immigrants from Russia, in the Jewish colonies of Judah and the Galilee. Berdichevsky sent a few of his renderings of medieval legends which described the rise and fall of warrior messiahs.

The book was dedicated to eight men who had been killed in clashes with Arabs between the years 1890 and 1911. And a number of the contributions took the form of obituary notices written in a strictly cut-and-dried form. This was true for the most part of A.Z. Rabinovich writing on Yaakov Plotkin whom he had known for many years in Poltava (both men belonged to an older generation, perhaps twice as old as the average member of the Second Aliya). On Zvi Bartanovsky, who was killed when the book was already in press, only a few lines were published: “He was a guard at Sejera and on Saturday, 13 July 1911, at dawn, he saw two Arabs descending the hill. When he asked them who they were, they did not reply but fired at him. Two hours later he died.”¹¹ (The book also contained a photograph of Bartanovsky.)

¹⁰ Y.H. Brenner, “Tsiyunim,” *Ha-poel ha-tsair*, no. 22 (28 August 1911), p. 7, note.

¹¹ “Tsvi Bartanovsky, zikhrono li-vrakha,” “*Yizkor: matsevet zikaron le-halele ha-poalim ha-ivriyim be-erets yisrael*, ad. A.Z. Rabinovich (Jaffa, 1911), p. 16 b.

The differences of emphasis which can clearly be perceived in the book – and which immediately became the cause of open dispute – involved essentially three separate, albeit interrelated, issues. What was the correct approach to Jewish-Arab relations in Palestine, to the history and religious traditions of the Jewish people, and to the memorialization of comrades who had lost their lives so soon after arriving in Palestine?

In the short introduction to *Yizkor*, signed by the anonymous "editorial committee," a relatively large amount of space was devoted to discussing the relationship between the Jewish and Arab peoples. It was much easier from the psychological point of view, so the argument there went, to accept the many deaths suffered from malaria, an impersonal force, than to reconcile oneself to those resulting from violence

at the hands of human beings, at the hands of brothers, members of a nation [*am*] which is close to us from the racial point of view – deaths caused without point, without real reason, without conscious thought.

We have returned to our country, to our homeland, with strong feelings of affection [*ahava*] for the nation living here. We have had more than enough of the domineering arrogance of the Aryan peoples and we know that the one God, the God of Israel and of the world, calls upon us and upon the Arabs to unite in the common cause – to restore our country which lies waste to prosperity; to spread knowledge together; to share the benefits of human culture.

Now, too, we remain convinced that at long last the Arabs will recognize the fact that *their* progress depends today on truly and fully cooperating with us – just as in the Spanish period, which was so enlightened, the Jews [*ivrim*]¹² and Arabs worked shoulder to shoulder, making remarkable contributions to every sphere of knowledge.¹³

But, of course, this could only be one side of the coin and there followed the assurance that "until those fortunate days arrive we shall not desert our flag, the flag of labor and of life."

It emerged in the subsequent public exchanges that this editorial note had been written, in whole or in part, by Radler-Feldman (Rabi Binyamin)¹⁴ although it must have been approved by A.Z. Rabinovich

¹² The use of the term '*ivrim*' [Hebrews] rather than *yehudim* was frequent in Second Aliya writing. This distinction often served a clear ideological purpose, usually to emphasize the existence of, or need for, a new type of Jew. Here, the author probably chose the term in order to underline the close racial and historical links of the Jews ('*ivrim*') and the Arabs ('*aravim*').

¹³ Maarekhet Yizkor, "Hakdama," *Yizkor*, pp. iv–v.

¹⁴ I.e.: "I have no doubt that if the two peoples understood their present role in history, they would realize the necessity of sharing the one and same position. It was out of this awareness that I wrote what I did in the introduction to *Yizkor*." R. Binyamin, "Al-odot 'yizkor'," *Ha-poel ha-tsair*, no. 8 (24 January 1912), p. 12.

(and presumably by the other committee members, Yaakov Rabinovich, Yosef Shprintsak and M. Titelman).¹⁵ And in another, a signed, contribution to *Yizkor*, Rabi Binyamin returned to the theme of Arab-Jewish relations. In his recollections about his friend, he put great emphasis on the fact that Berele Shveiger had chosen to go to Galilee and become a guard not simply because he loathed dull routine and longed for adventure but also because he

envied *the life of the Arabs*. That life for him was a symbol, an aspiration, the highest and the finest. What liberty! What space! As high as the mountain! What strength! What a sense of honor! What self respect!

During that same walk [from Petah Tikva to Jaffa] we came across a galloping horse; Berele at one go jumped on to its back and put on for me a demonstration [*fantasia*], Arab-style.

He developed a real yearning for the life of the Arabs.¹⁶

Shveiger was by no means alone in his admiration for the bolder aspects of the Arab (or perhaps more exactly, the Beduin) way of life. To a very great extent, members of the Ha-Shomer organization tended not only to ride their horses hard and fast in local style but also to wear Arab clothing and head-dress. They also made an effort to learn Arabic, and entertained Arabs in accordance with the etiquette of the country.¹⁷ In 1912, Yosef Aharonovich, the leading ideologist of Ha-Poel Ha-Tsair, would complain that the net result of all this was that the guards tended to speak only Yiddish and almost no Hebrew. ("The moral state of the organization," he then concluded, "is totally unsatisfactory.")¹⁸

¹⁵ For the composition of the board: "Mikhtavim le-maarekhet," *ibid.*, no. 11 (13 March 1911), p. 16.

¹⁶ R. Binyamin. "Shloshe she-metu ke-ehad," *Yizkor*, p. 2. This article was first published in *Ha-poel ha-tsair*, but the following passage in the original version was not reproduced in *Yizkor*: "He [Shveiger] was becoming – or, at least, wished to become – Arabized; to be like the best among the Arabs. In seeking to be totally Hebrew, he wanted to be like them. He wanted the Hebrew in him to be like the Arab in them. That writer who expressed fear in *Ha-shiloah* regarding the influence of the Arabs on the young generation in our country could have selected B. [Shveiger] as a perfect example. But so could all those who, from Benjamin Disraeli to the author of these lines, believe that the entire Semitic race really does have a great deal in common." *Ha-poel ha-tsair*, no. 12 (12 April 1910), p. 7. The writer referred to here was Yosef Klausner; see Ish Ivri [Klausner], "Hashash," *Ha-shiloah*, vol. 17 (July–December 1907), pp. 575–77.

¹⁷ See, e.g. Manya Shohat-Vilbushevich, "Ha-shmira ba-arets," *Kovets ha-shomer* (Tel Aviv, 1936), pp. 51–52; and Yisrael Shohat, "Shlihut va-derekh," *Sefer ha-shomer* (Tel Aviv, 1957), p. 26.

¹⁸ Y. Aharonovich, "Klape pnim," *Ha-poel ha-tsair*, no. 5–6 (1 November 1912), p. 4.

However, Radler-Feldman clearly saw this motif in Shveiger's short career as legitimate and even admirable. In general, both he and Yaakov Rabinovich¹⁹ in their recollections about the men whom they had known personally (Shveiger and Korngold) made a determined effort to bring out their individuality, their eccentricities, weaknesses as well as strengths: two young men, the one from the Moldovanka district of Odessa, the other from some unspecified place in the Pale of Settlement, who had begun to become part of the Galilee landscape before death struck them down.

Representing a totally different position, another pole even, was Zeru-bavel's contribution to *Yizkor*. His prose poem, "Lines" (*Kavim*) made no direct reference to the Arabs in Palestine, but there was the clear, albeit implicit, assumption that Jewish settlement in Palestine would not be able to advance without coming up against and defeating persistent, violent resistance. The work was divided into four parts: "On the sea" (a symbolic reference to the Exile); "The soil" (the motherland); "Graves", and "Creating."

In the third section, the narrator contrasts the "here" (Eretz Yisrael) with the "there" (the Exile):

Graves there and graves here . . . Which blood is dearer to [one's spirit]? . . . More people fell there; and here there is only a beginning and only few . . .

But here they fell in a *different way* . . . Here they labored in the sweat of their brow and here their blood was spilt . . . And the blood fell on the soil which they had ploughed and the soil soaked it up. And new life, stormy and many-coloured, springs up around those graves . . .

I fell on the earth, soaked in blood, and gave it my oath that I would not leave, that I would keep faith with my comrades, that their memories might be perpetuated for ever.

Where there is life there is battle. And where there is battle, the grave cannot be escaped.

I am still young, and the urge to be is strong within me . . . I have land . . . I shall go to do battle . . . there will be new graves . . . blood which is new and fresh . . . And the earth, the soil of the motherland, will renew its days; . . . new life will break forth . . .²⁰

This theme of blood and soil recurs elsewhere in the volume. K.L. Silman, in another prose poem, "Personal Thoughts" (*Me-hirhurei liba*),

¹⁹ Y. Rabinovich, "Zikhronot ve-hirhurim," *Yizkor*, pp. 4–8. (In this article, Rabinovich, *inter alia*, described the following qualities as characteristic of the Russian-Jewish youth at the time of the Second Aliya: "taut nerves; the negation of the existent; ceaseless yearning; and a gallows-humor" [p. 5]).

²⁰ Zerubavel, "Kavim," *Yizkor*, pp. 76–77.

described in encapsulated form a number of savage attacks on young Jews, workers and guards. But he, too, suggested that death in such circumstances should be seen as a guarantee of collective renewal:

Blood, blood. Its color is beautiful and the soil in which it sinks becomes dear to us, is cherished. For, as the body has need of blood, so does an entire nation and so does the earth . . . Take away the memories of our blood and one removes much from the great past of the world and of ourselves. If we had not irrigated the land with our blood we would not be standing on it today . . .

We shed our blood and we live here. Our life is the continuation of the past and so too is the spilt blood. A nation does not build its life except on the foundations of its past and blood is joined to blood.

Silman concluded in these words:

And you should know that one song of long ago brought us, the young generation, here to their country:

"Neither the fire nor the sun but our blood
Will turn your mountains red, O Zion!"²¹

In his essay, "Self-Sacrifice" (*Mesirut nefesh*), Dr. Joshua Thon gave expression to the identical theme. "National aspirations," he wrote,

cannot be realized unless for their sake people lay down their lives. Without the sign of blood [*hotem ha-dam*] no national hope in history was ever fulfilled. Our hopes have already received the stamp of blood, warm blood, young blood. Now we can rest assured that their time will come. The nation will live for ever and the memory of the young men who shed their blood guarantees that our hope, eternal [life], will never be erased from our history.²²

The theme of self-sacrifice was presented in very different form by Yisrael Giladi in his short obituary notice on Yehezkel Nisanov, but the moral was very similar. Unflinching bravery had to become the norm in the confrontation between the Jewish guard and the Arab marauder. Nisanov was killed in 1911 when he refused to surrender the mules pulling his cart on the way from Merhavia to Yavniel.

Of course, he preferred to be killed rather than to give up his mules to the Arabs. When they stole the animals from some farmer Nisanov would reproach him bitterly: "How is it that you are still alive and your animals are gone? Shame on you!" And now he has shown that he was as good as his word. "I have shown,"

²¹ K.L. Silman, "Me-hirhure liba," *ibid.*, pp. 50–51. The poem/song quoted here is by Sara Shapira, "Al tal ve-al matar," republished, *e.g.* in Y. S. Segal (ed.) *Ha'meshorer ha'ivri: kovets shire tsiyon* (Cracow, 1905), pp. 42–43.

²² J. Thon, "Mesirut nefesh," *Yizkor*, p. 20.

Nisanov would say, "that a Jewish worker will not permit himself to be put to shame, even if it costs him his life, for on this depends the honor and future of his nation [*amo*]." ²³

That such a wide gap separated the message of Rabi Binyamin (Radler-Feldman) from that of Zerubavel (and the others writing along the same lines) was by no means surprising. Disagreements about Jewish-Arab relations can be traced back to the very first years of the Second Aliya and were becoming more acute with the passage of time.

In 1907, Radler-Feldman had published a short article on the subject in the Hebrew journal *Ha-meorer*, edited by Brenner in London. Although written in quasi-Biblical verse, and oddly entitled "An Arabian Prophecy" (*Masa'arav*), it presented a clear enough conception of how the Zionist movement should seek to order the relationship between the *Yishuv* and the Arabs.

Yosef Gorni, in a pioneer and important essay on the thought of the Second Aliya, ²⁴ has argued that this article by Rabi Binyamin can be seen as belonging to the same category as Yitshak Epstein's (by now famous) article of the same year, "An Unasked Question" (*Sheelah neelama*). And it is certainly true that both these writers advocated policies of the utmost caution and tact in all that concerned the highly sensitive issues of land purchase and agrarian settlement by the Jews. There was, however, also a significant difference between them. Epstein insisted that a bitter conflict between the two nations in Palestine was inevitable unless Jewish settlement was strictly confined to areas which were marginal agriculturally (mountain or swampland) and therefore unworked by the Arabs. ²⁵ That such a strategy was bound to put tight limits on the potential size of the *Yishuv* was not of primary concern to Epstein who, like Ahad Ha-Am, thought of Zionism (or Hibat Zion) more in terms of quality, a national center, than of quantity, a refuge for the Jewish people as a whole.

While Epstein was thus very much the pessimist, Rabi Binyamin developed a highly optimistic prognosis. True, he too warned against the enormous dangers which were bound to result from any idea that the Jews had the right or the possibility to treat the country simply as their own and to take it over at the expense of the Arab inhabitants. ("And do not think in

²³ Y. Giladi, "Zikhronot," *ibid.*, p. 16 b.

²⁴ Y. Gorni, "Shorasheha shel todaat ha-imut ha-leumi ha-yehudi-aravi ve-hishtakfuta be-itonut ha-ivrit ba-shanim 1900-1918," *Ha-tsiyonut*, vol. 4 (1975), pp. 72-113.

²⁵ Y. Epstein, "Sheela neelama," *Ha-shiloah*, vol. 17 (July-December 1907), pp. 193-205.

thine heart any evil thought of driving them out of the land of thy fathers, for it is not wise. And such a thing can never come to pass . . . [for] thou might stir up against thee the sons of Shem who are thine own kith and kin. And they shall become enemies unto thee and thou shall be scorned in thine own land and among the nations. And thou shall be beset by enemies at home and abroad.”)²⁶

But, for his part, Rabi Binyamin argued that there was no insurmountable obstacle to the Arab population’s accepting Jewish settlement on a massive scale. Rapid development of the country, the introduction of modern education open to Arabs and Jews alike, and strict adherence to full equality between the two peoples, would eradicate the potential causes of conflict. Given modernization, Palestine could absorb five million Jews without infringing on the rights or standing of the half-million Arabs already living there. Given the common racial origins of the two nations, they could well merge eventually to form a single people.²⁷

It is clear that Rabi Binyamin remained true to this vision throughout the entire period of the Second Aliya. Following the publication of *Yizkor*, he wrote at least two more articles where he developed the points he had first made in 1907. In one of them, he argued against Ahad Ha-Am that full scale economic advance would make possible a solution both to the “Jewish question” abroad, through mass immigration to Palestine, and also to the national question in Palestine. (“The Jew and the Arab are not two opposing forces.”)²⁸ In the other, he called for the establishment of a Shrine of Peace in Jerusalem which would contain a major library of books on the theme of peace and also, for its deterrent effect, a photograph and picture exhibition of those killed and wounded in war. Of the Yishuv he wrote: “We are for peace; our eyes are turned to peace.”²⁹

On these issues, Rabi Binyamin was by no means speaking for Ha-Poel Ha-Tsair as a whole. In 1908–9, leading spokesmen for the party had sharply refuted the idea that the Jews set aside part of their own funds to further Arab economic and cultural development. The extremely limited financial resources of the Zionist movement, wrote Moshe Smilansky, for example, had to be devoted exclusively to the overriding goal of attaining “the majority here in our own country.”³⁰ For his part, Aharonovich

²⁶ R. Binyamin, “Masa-arav,” *Ha-meorer*, no. 7 (July 1907), p. 272.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 273.

²⁸ R. Binyamin, “Be-reshit,” *Benatayim: kovets sifrut* (Jerusalem, 1913), p. 98.

²⁹ R. Binyamin, “Hekhal ha-shalom,” *Ha-toren*, no. 1 (New York, 1913), pp. 37–39.

³⁰ Heruti [M. Smilansky], “Me-inyane ha-yishuv,” *Ha-poel ha-tsa'ir* (Shvat-Adar 5668/January–February 1908), p. 9. (Cf. his view there: “If Palestine belongs, in the national

noted that the "constant hatred and national conflict" did, at least, act as a powerful incentive for the farmers to employ Jewish rather than Arab workers.³¹ And A.D. Gordon, while granting that "one cannot say that the Arabs have no part," no rights, to the country, still concluded that it "will belong more to that side which is the more able, willing, to suffer and work for it."³²

Nonetheless, it was by no means unusual to find statements in *Ha-poel ha-tsair* expressing disgust at the way in which many of the colonists treated their Arab workers. ("How is it," asked Smilansky, "that a wise and intelligent people . . . threatened by its neighbors who are native to the country . . . acts with arrogance and, at times, with terrible contempt towards them . . . [It seems that] we are not wise nor intelligent, not in part, not at all.")³³ This fact goes a long way to explaining why Radler-Feldman, although outside the mainstream of party thought, could still be invited to take part in writing the introduction to *Yizkor* – the editorial board was made up primarily of men associated with Ha-Poel Ha-Tsair.

In marked contrast, Zerubavel belonged to the leadership group of Poale Zion and was one of the editors (together with Ben Gurion and Ben Zvi) of its organ, *Ha-ahdut*. While the high-pitched tone which characterized his contribution to, and his articles about, *Yizkor* was to a great extent a matter of personal choice and taste, the views there advanced were typical enough of opinion at the higher level of the party.

There was, of course, much of the paradoxical in the fact that somebody of Zerubavel's background should have emerged not only as an advocate of nationalist militancy but also as a writer ready to employ a mythological and mystical mode of political expression. After all, like Ben Zvi, he, too, had been an active member of the Poale Zion party in Poltava. Ber Borochov, another native of the town, had totally dominated the party there, and Ben Zvi and Zerubavel saw themselves – and were generally so perceived – as among his most loyal and most important disciples, dedicated *Borokhovtsy*.

sense, to the Arabs who have settled here . . . then we have no place in it . . . And if it belongs to us, then the national interests of our people come before everything else. There is no room for compromise here." *Ibid.*, p. 5.)

³¹ Y. Aharonovich, "Kibush ha-avoda o kibush ha-karka," *Ha-poel ha-tsair*, no. 12 (Elul 5668/August–September 1908), p. 3.

³² A.D. Gordon, "Pitaron lo ratsyonali," *ibid.*, no. 17 (1 July 1909), p. 5.

³³ Heruti (M. Smilansky), "Me-inyane ha-yishuv," *ibid.* (Tevet 5668/December 1907–January 1908), p. 6.

The basic doctrine of the party, as formulated by Borochov in *Our Platform* of 1906, was strictly Marxist. The triumph of Zionism, he there postulated, was guaranteed by the unfolding of long-term socio-economic processes (the flow of international capital, industrialization, the marginalization of the Jewish middle and working classes, migration). Determinism was the key note and the terminology entirely "scientific." There was no room for voluntarism, still less for romanticism in any shape or form. The primary and essential task of the party was to conduct the class struggle of the proletariat. Borochov argued that as capitalism transformed the economic basis of the society in Palestine, so the Arab population, caught up by the forces of modernization, would eventually and inevitably adopt the Jewish culture and be assimilated into the Jewish people, soon to become the great majority. The Jewish proletariat could thus dedicate itself to class rather than national conflict.³⁴

Variations on this theme frequently made themselves heard in the immediate post-revolutionary period. Thus Efraim Blumenfeld, a leading member of Russian Poale Zion, could write in 1908 that it was the task of the party in Palestine to explain to the Arab workers

the common interests which they share with the world proletariat in general, and with the Jewish proletariat in particular, and take them into our trade-union organizations. We must in no way exclude the Arab working-class from Jewish production (we ourselves have been too often and too long excluded). On the contrary, we must render the Arab worker more capable of fighting against Jewish exploitation.³⁵

Similarly, Ben Zvi, writing from Palestine in 1908, could insist that the Jewish working-class would grow not as the result of the manifestos of Ha-Poel Ha-Tsair but rather in response to the economic laws of supply and demand. Skilled or experienced workers would be drawn naturally to appropriate jobs. "It is stupid, utopian," he wrote,

to say that the approximately six thousand Arabs [working in the colonies] . . . are going to be replaced by Jewish *eksterny*, clerks, accountants . . . It is . . . actually treasonable to create the illusion . . . that one must have "young Zionists" to drive out the Arabs.³⁶

³⁴ On Borokhov, e.g. M. Mintz, *Ber Borokhov: ha-maagal ha-rishon (1900-1906)* (Tel Aviv, 1976). Cf. B. Borokhov, *Ktavim*, ed. L. Levite et al., vol. I (Tel Aviv, 1955).

³⁵ E. Blumenfeld (David Bloch), "Tsu der frage vegn der realizirung fun der teritorialpolit. oytonomye in palestine," *Der yidisher arbeter* (Galicia), no. 18 (28 May 1908), p. 2.

³⁶ Avner [Ben Zvi], "Undzer arbet in palestine," *ibid.*, no. 19 (4 June 1908), p. 2.

However, Marxism, as formulated by Borochov in 1906, was by no means the only major influence at work in the early years of the Poale Zion party in Palestine. The party members who founded Bar Giora in 1907 had almost all arrived in the country in the years 1904–5 and had brought with them far more romantic and voluntaristic conceptions of Zionism. Yisrael Shohat, the leader of Bar Giora and Ha-Shomer, found inspiration more in the Russian Socialist Revolutionary movement (with its traditions of political terrorism) than in Social Democracy.³⁷ Another key figure in these para-military organizations, Alexander Zaid, has testified to the enormous influence exerted on Poale Zion circles in Russia before 1905 by Michael Halperin, a pioneer and adventurer who had founded a secret society in the early 1890s to plan an armed uprising against Ottoman rule and who advocated the formation of Jewish groups in Sinai which would live like Beduin and eventually join the British in conquering Palestine.

Bar Giora itself followed the most conspiratorial rules.³⁸ Their members were initiated in a mysterious nocturnal ceremony, and sworn to silence and absolute loyalty ("whoever enters the society cannot leave it alive").³⁹ When the group was in Sejera in 1907–8, it kept its activities secret even from long-time members of Poale Zion working at the settlement, among them David Ben Gurion (Grin). Ha-Shomer, ostensibly a trade-union organization representing the Jewish watchmen, was in reality controlled by the inner nucleus belonging to Bar Giora.⁴⁰ Both these para-military organizations shared the same motto (taken from a poem by the well-known Hebrew poet, Yaakov Cohen): "In blood and fire Judeah did fall; in blood and fire shall Judeah arise."⁴¹

Yitshak Ben Zvi, who arrived in Palestine in 1907 and from the first became the leading ideologist of the Poale Zion party, was among the founding members of Bar Giora. Why precisely a man committed, publicly at least, to the idea of a Social Democratic party based on a mass proletarian membership should have involved himself on arrival in a tiny,

³⁷ Y. Shohat, "Shlihut va-derekh," *Sefer ha-shomer*, p. 7. On this general theme: Y. Gorni, "Ha-yesod ha-romanti ba-ideologiya shel ha-aliya ha-shniya," *Asupot*, no. 10 (1966), pp. 55–74.

³⁸ A. Zaid, *Haye rishonim: mi-yomane Aleksander Zayd*, ed. E. Smoli (Tel Aviv, 1942), pp. 24–30.

³⁹ Ester Beker, "Me-haye mishpahot shomer," *Sefer ha-aliya ha-shniya*, ed. B. Habas (Tel Aviv, 1947), p. 511.

⁴⁰ See e.g. *Sefer le-toldot ha-hagana*, ed. S. Avigur et al., vol. 1 (Tel Aviv, 1954), pp. 213–15.

⁴¹ Y. Cohen, "Biryonom mi-[ye]me ha-pulmusim shel Titus ve-Shimon Ben-Kokhav," *Ha-shiloah*, vol. 12 (July–December 1903), p. 565.

clandestine and adventurist group is not entirely clear. But there is no doubt that the pogroms during the Russian revolution (particularly during the month of October 1905) had produced a deeply traumatic effect particularly on those who, like the Poale Zion, were fully involved in the desperate attempts at self-defense. (Ben Zvi opened his reminiscences of Yaakov Plotkin in *Yizkor* with a description of the fear which pervaded a meeting held at night in a Bet-Midrash in Poltava as the Cossack cavalry roamed the streets outside, “a period of mighty events, in the days of the revolution, the pogroms and the self-defense [*ha-hagana*].”)⁴² The urge to arm, to prepare for any contingency, to defend the honor of a people which had just suffered (for so it was felt) the profoundest humiliations, was for many of the young immigrants the overriding emotion.

Until the revolution of the Young Turks and the establishment of constitutional government in Istanbul, it had been possible to explain the para-military activities of Bar Giora and other groups nominally attached to Poale Zion as part of the build-up towards the coming anti-feudal, anti-autocratic, revolution in the Ottoman Empire. When, in 1908, Turkish troops (in response to a violent clash between party members and Arab youths in Jaffa) attacked the Hotel Spektor, shooting wildly and wounding over a dozen of the young Jewish workers there, Ben Zvi explained what had happened as the result not of Arab nationalism but as “a pogrom instigated by the lower echelons of the Turkish administration.”

We have always anticipated as inevitable a conflict between the incoming Jews . . . and the Turkish regime. We have never fooled ourselves into thinking that the Jewish forces in Palestine could always grow through a process that is always calm and slow . . . [It] is bound to involve those long-term revolutionary factors that solve the problems of the people not by paper rights but by blood and iron.⁴³

(In contrast, Moshe Smilansky was highly critical of the young radicals who “spoke openly in Jaffa of barricades and bombs . . . ; [who] could hardly grasp that the time was not ripe to order our relationship with the Arabs on the basis of strict reciprocity . . . ; [who] in their fantasies saw themselves as already rulers of the country; . . . [and argue] . . . that the Arab only respects the strong.”)⁴⁴

⁴² Y.-n. Zvi [Ben Zvi], “Zikhronot,” *Yizkor*, p. 12.

⁴³ Avner [Ben Zvi], “Di yafo’er lektsyon,” *Der yidisher arbeter*, no. 12–13 (14 April 1908), p. 3 (On this armed clash, he wrote there: “The Land of Canaan, after an interval of hundreds of years, has again reached out to taste the warm blood of its children.”)

⁴⁴ Ha-mashkif [M. Smilansky], “Hashkafa ivrit,” *Ha-shiloah*, vol. 18 (January–June 1908), p. 381

However, under the new constitutional order of things, it could no longer be maintained that the *raison d'être* of Jewish para-military organization was, in essence, revolutionary and anti-imperialist. There could be no denying that Ha-Shomer was quickly becoming a key factor in Arab-Jewish relations nor that those relations were marked by increasing tension. On the one hand, opposition to Zionism among the Arabs of Palestine became much more vocal, finding expression in the local press (most notably in the Haifa paper, *al-Karmil*) and in the central Turkish parliament, the Mejlis.⁴⁵ The more frequent armed attacks on the Jewish settlements in Galilee were now widely seen as a symptom of an emergent and militant Arab nationalism. On the other hand, in Ha-Shomer, the Jewish labor movement had an armed force of its own, albeit numbering only several dozens, which, unlike Bar Giora, was a matter of public knowledge and acted openly.

And it became increasingly evident that for Ha-Shomer to avoid involvement in recurring cycles of violence was almost impossible. When it supplied the guards to a given colony, it made direct enemies of the group (neighboring Arabs or Cherkessy) which it had replaced. In the ensuing clashes, the Jewish guards had to demonstrate their determination not to give ground while at the same time seeking to avoid at all costs any loss of life. Once a local Arab had been killed, a blood feud of fearsome proportions could only be avoided, if at all, by endless negotiations, court hearings, and huge monetary payments. To expect that all the very young men involved would be able to combine absolute courage with complete self-discipline was to ask the impossible.⁴⁶ More Jews than Arabs ended up being killed and still the colonies and settlement organizations found themselves struggling to fend off the nightmare of the vendetta.

It was against this background that Zerubavel became involved in 1911 (well before the publication of *Yizkor*) in a polemical defense of the Jewish guards. As Ha-Shomer grew in size, power and the scope of its activities, so, however gradually, it came to be seen as a legitimate object

⁴⁵ See e.g. N.J. Mandel, *The Arabs and Zionism Before World War I* (Berkeley, 1976); and Y. Ro'i, "Yahase rehovot im shkeneha ha-aravim," *Ha-tsiyonut*, vol. 1 (1970), pp. 150-204. Cf. Y. Ro'i, "The Zionist Attitude to the Arabs 1908-1914," *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 4 (1967-68), pp. 198-242.

⁴⁶ There were recurring demands in Ha-Shomer, when members were killed, that it permit retaliation in accord with the local usage of the blood feud. E.g. Y. Shohat, "Shlihut va-derekh," *Sefer ha-shomer*, pp. 26, 37; D. Zebich, "Reshito shel ha-ro'e," *ibid.*, p. 119.

of public criticism. The articles which provoked Zerubavel to come to an impassioned defense of the guards were both published in June 1911, the one by the famous Hebrew writer David Frishman, who had come to Palestine on a visit in order to write a series of personal reports for the Warsaw papers *Haynt* and *Ha-tsifra*, the other by Yaakov Rabinovich writing in *Ha-poel ha-tsair*.

The latter chose his words with extreme care and made manifest throughout his support for the principle that the colonies should be guarded by Jews alone. But, he asked, was not too high a price being paid for the sheer bravado of the guards? "One of the most difficult questions which we face," he wrote,

is how to treat the matter of guarding and yet this question is being handled with a certain frivolity . . . In Galilee, it seems . . . there are some things not right in the [existing] system. The frequent loss of life incurred year after year raises the suspicion that the methods of guarding employed do not take local conditions sufficiently into account . . . To hold the sword in one hand while working with the other has in it much of the poetic; it lifts the spirit; but do we have so many forces at our disposal that we are entitled to sacrifice Jewish lives for the sake of a sheaf of corn or a foal?⁴⁷

Reacting to the recent clashes around the new settlement of Merhavia, Frishman was much more outspoken. He dismissed as absurd reports in the Polish Jewish press which described the events there as a "pogrom." The level of violence in Palestine, he declared, was non-existent when compared with what the Jews had experienced in the Russian Empire. "At the most somebody, perhaps accompanied by two or three others, attacks somebody else, and it can even end in bloodletting and death." But as for a pogrom, "the country has simply not yet reached that level of culture."

What had struck him as an outside observer was how confident, even arrogant and contemptuous, the Jewish colonists often were in their behavior towards the Arab population. And he also came away with the clear impression that for their part, the young guards seemed to regard intimidation as the best form of defense:

These youngsters, forever on horseback, forever full of fire, are always ready (like the Beduin in the desert) to demonstrate every variety of show and acrobatics on their horses – a *fantasia*, as they call it. What these guards do is not so much to defend themselves as to provoke others. As far as they are concerned, the main thing is that everybody else should see that the [Jewish] people here are harsh and of quick temper and so, out of fear, refrain from theft.

⁴⁷ Y. Rabinovich, "Ba-arim u-vamoshavot," *Ha-poel ha-tsair*, no. 18 (27 June 1911), p. 4.

Summing up his impressions of colonists and guards alike, Frishman wondered whether “just as there is that wonderful phenomenon in the world, antisemitism, shall not we, when we only have the ability to do so, create ‘anti-goyism’? Are we witnessing a permanent trait in human nature which leads the persecuted, given the chance, to become the persecutor?”⁴⁸

In his response, entitled “Tolerance” [*Sovlanut*], and published in *Ha-abdut*, Zerubavel argued that the Yishuv had simply no right to be easy-going in its relationship with the Arabs. To advocate relaxation, concessions, was to follow the ways of the Exile,

to adapt . . . , to bend, to bow one’s back, to swallow politely every insult and choke down every protest – . . . There is no room here [in this Galut outlook] for unadulterated emotion: the main thing, in its eyes, is *calculation*. Is it worthwhile? Will it not produce a greater evil? . . . Here rationality and measurement take the place of feeling and create the Galut mentality even in the modern Jew.

Those fired with “the yearning for Redemption [*Geula*]” had to refute this entire approach. Yehezkel Nisanov had been absolutely right not to surrender his horses, even though by so doing he risked and lost his life. If, as was the case, the Jewish guards had lost seven men over recent years while only two Arabs had been killed, how could the former be accused of seeking to intimidate? “The root of our problem lies not in a lack of tolerance but in the fact that tolerance has rooted itself too deeply in many of us.”⁴⁹

This theme recurred in a number of articles published by Zerubavel during the year of 1911,⁵⁰ and it can therefore have come as no surprise

⁴⁸ D. Frishman, “Ha-yadata et ha-arets? Reshimot mi-masaai be-erets yisrael,” *Ha-tsifra*, no. 126 (3–16 June 1911). The same thought was expressed by Ahad Ha-Am in a letter to Moshe Smilansky two years later: “If things are like this now, I cannot but wonder what our attitude to others will be if one day we were to become the dominant force in Eretz Yisrael! If this is the Messiah, I prefer not to be here when he comes [*yete ve-lo ahimime*].” Ahad Ha-Am, *Igrot*, vol. 5 (Tel Aviv, 1959), pp. 201–2.

⁴⁹ Zerubavel, “Sovlanut,” *Ha-abdut*, no. 35 (11 Tamuz 5671/7 July 1911), p. 14.

⁵⁰ E.g. Zerubavel, “Shte shitot,” *ibid.*, no 36 (18 Tamuz 5671/14 July 1911), pp. 4–5, where he wrote that unless the Jews took upon themselves both to work and to guard their land, education in the new values would be impossible: “The spirit of the Redemption must permeate the entire enterprise.”

In Zerubavel’s view, the *shomrim* were duty-bound to insist on the employment of Jewish workers in the colonies. Otherwise, he insisted, the role of the guards would lose its historic centrality. Thus he could write later in 1911: “When we separate guarding from all the other branches of labor, it loses its significance in every way. Is it really such an ideal to sacrifice one’s life in defending the property of some plantation-owner in Petah Tikva? Why is he privileged more than some money-lender or timber merchant

that he reacted furiously to *Yizkor* when it was finally published. His response was so long that it had to be divided up and brought out in two successive issues of *Ha-abdut*. As shall be discussed below, he had his own very clear-cut concept of the place of the Second Aliya in Jewish history and this concept was simply not shared by all the contributors, nor indeed by the editor. He was also highly critical of the fact that a book dedicated in its entirety to men who had fallen in combat did not present a strong political message, was lacking in singleminded didacticism.

But, above all, he was repelled by the unsigned editorial note (which he must surely have known was written primarily by Rabi Binyamin). Zerubavel found the introduction so pusillanimous in both content and tone, that, as he put it, it must have been written not from sincere conviction but simply to silence potential critics outside the *Yishuv*. He did not clarify whether he had in mind Zionist or other Jewish liberals and socialists in Europe, the Turkish authorities, or the Arab publicists, who by then were avidly seeking material for use against the *Yishuv*, although he was probably referring to the last of these groups.

He quoted at length from the introduction in order to demonstrate how ridiculous it was. For example, he picked out the passages on “[our] feelings of affection [*ahava*] for the nation living here”; on the Arabs as “close to us from the racial point of view” (“Incredible!” was his interjection here); and on the idea that progress by the Arabs was dependent “on truly and fully cooperating *with us*.” (The italics were added by Zerubavel who also wrote, ironically, “So you Arabs, now know what you have to do for your own good!”)⁵¹

This insistence on self-abnegation, he argued, was clearly a survival from the Exile: “The Galut Jew [*yehudi*] takes it upon himself to prove that his life is of use, of use to others; that his development is essential...essential to others.” Or as he summed it up elsewhere in the article:

in Kiev or Moscow to be defended by the best of the Jewish people? Is it really enough that the one makes his money out of the sands of Eretz Yisrael and the other out of the wood of the Russian forests? ... What is so marvellous for us if we have a few dozen youth who in, and for, their job have learned to ride well and to shoot straight and fearlessly? Do we not have such elements in Exile too?” Zerubavel, “Shmira ve-avoda,” *ibid.*, no. 5 (26 Heshvan 5672/17 November 1911), p. 4.

The tension endemic in the relationship between Ha-Shomer and its mother-party, Poale Zion, which is evident in these lines, would lead to open confrontation during and after World War I. The Hagana was set up essentially to replace Ha-Shomer.

⁵¹ Zerubavel, “Yizkor (shivre raayonot),” *Ha-abdut*, no. 13 (19 Tevet 5672/9 January 1912), pp. 17–18.

Even when here and there a rebel cry breaks forth from the heart, nonetheless the eyes, full of fear, dart around to make sure some outsider does not catch what is being said. . . .

The editorial introduction to *Yizkor* speaks in a weak voice, frightened and false. It is as though these fresh graves are here because of mere accident – [deaths] "caused without point, without real reason, without conscious thought." Thus, all that is wrong is that the Arabs have not reached the level of consciousness and do not know what they do. They do not understand us and we have to enlighten them . . . The Jew [*ha-yehudi*], the light unto the nations, has opened his mouth and he is *apologizing*. The entire introduction addresses itself not to us, but to others, to those outside.⁵²

Radler-Feldman replied at once to Zerubavel's attack, publishing a short response, "On *Yizkor*," in the *Ha-poel ha-tsair* of 24 January 1912. He dismissed as absurd the charge that the introduction was written in a spirit of hypocrisy to mislead the outside world and pointed out that he had published the same ideas in his "Arabian Prophecy" when he was still living in Bukovina. But the main point was different. To do everything within reason, to avoid unnecessary conflict, was not a mark of the Jew as coward.

Whoever knows anything at all about international affairs knows to what an extent nations are ready to apologize – that is, avoid pointless provocations against their neighbors . . . We do not have a government of our own [to negotiate] with the nation living next door to us. But is it a cause for shame if, wanting to live on the best of terms and in peace, we say so in print . . . ? Our settlement work has to be carried through together with *the Arabs*. And I really do believe that there is something which unites these two nations, the Hebrew [*ha-ivri*] and the Arab. The fact that there are cases of temporary conflict does not mean much. Lovers also quarrel, but such quarrels perhaps mark the most beautiful moments in their relationship.⁵³

These sentiments, frequently expressed by Radler-Feldman in this period, were to provoke an irritated rejoinder from Yosef Chaim Brenner in 1913. As Brenner saw it, there was nothing random in the emergent conflict between Arabs and Jews. It was inevitable that the Arab population should feel itself ever more threatened as Jewish immigration and agricultural settlement gathered momentum. However underdeveloped in the cultural sense, the six hundred thousand Arabs in the country were,

for practical purposes, the masters of this country and we are pushing into their midst . . . There is now, there is bound to be, hatred between us, and it will exist

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁵³ R. Binyamin, "Al-odot 'yizkor'," *Ha-poel ha-tsair*, no. 8 (24 January, 1912), p. 12.

in the future, too. They are stronger than us in every sense . . . but we Jews have long since become accustomed to living as the weak among the strong . . . But those gentle souls who talk of love – let them be damned! The last thing we need is sentimentality and idealization.

To gloss over harsh realities, to indulge in self-deception, was absurd and ultimately dangerous. “In this idealized view of the world, in these childish and beautiful dreams, which lack all basis in the profoundest instincts of man, there is, as I see it, something simply immoral.”⁵⁴ (Given this clear-cut disassociation from Rabi Binyamin, it is not beyond the realms of possibility that Brenner resigned in 1911 as co-editor of *Yizkor* in opposition to the introductory note. However, as Brenner’s article on Arab-Jewish relations came out years later and made no reference to *Yizkor*, such an explanation is improbable. There are much stronger clues, as shall be described below, to suggest that his resignation was caused by his revulsion from idealization, myth-making, of a different kind.)

In his reply to Zerubavel, Rabi Binyamin did not confine himself to the issue of co-existence between the two nations living in Palestine. He also refuted another fundamental principle in the Zionist ideology as it was understood by Zerubavel, and, indeed, by a large body of opinion in the Second Aliya.

As Zerubavel saw it, the life of labor to which the young immigrants had pledged themselves represented a total break with two thousand years of Jewish history. To work the soil in the ancient homeland, to settle the country, to defend the settlements, meant to pick up the thread where it had been dropped by the Jewish people with their final defeat by the Romans. He constantly stressed the basic dichotomy between the new life, the new men, with their determination to create an independent nation, and the old life, static, other-worldly, wrapped up in prayers, passive politically and physically. The forces of the *Geula* (Redemption) stood in opposition to those of the *Galut*, the Exile.

A major complaint which he had against *Yizkor* was that commitment to stark dichotomy, this total break, by no means dominated the book. He himself registered his protest against this fact by dedicating the first section of his two-part article in *Ha-ahdut* entirely to the contrast between passivity and action. Since losing their independence, he argued, Jews had chosen to perpetuate the memory of famous rabbis because of their

⁵⁴ Y.H.B. (Brenner), “Mi-tokh pinkasi,” *Revivim*, no. 3–4 (Jerusalem, 1913), p. 165.

learning or piety – and in many cases because they had died as martyrs rather than accept apostasy. The prayer book recorded for ever the names and sufferings of the great rabbis (*harugei malkhut*) tortured to death by the Romans. Every year, in the Holy Land, large crowds of traditional Jews flocked to the burial place of Shimon Bar Yohai in Meron as well as to the graves of many other great sages. But a people who forever awaited salvation from the Heavens was not capable of remembering its forefathers who had fought for its freedom nor of recalling those who had led it into battle. With the final military defeat had begun the “tragedy of our passivity”; and there followed

the Inquisition and the stake, the expulsions the tortures, the pogroms... and the martyrs [*meunim*]. What other people is so rich in martyrs... in tragedies which have their source in the passivity of our faith...? What can this people, so unproductive, so dependent on hand-outs, so twisted in its feeling, have in common with Modiin? with Gush Halav? with Masada?⁵⁵

However, the new way of life lived by the pioneers was producing a new form of historical consciousness.

As of now thousands stream to Meron and a few dozen to Modiin... but only the youth and the workers go to Modiin... And now there is *Sejera*, too, an entirely new name... The Galilee knows no peace...; the smell of blood is in the air... There are fresh graves and this is a sign that new life is forming in the country... Martyrs are remembered in the hours of helplessness; heroes are taken for an example in times of courage and action... The Sicarii [*biryonim*] and the warriors of Bar Kochba were the last to fight for political freedom and for the chance to work freely in Eretz Yisrael; their grandsons, the Hebrew workers, are the first to fight for a free Jewish life...⁵⁶

Measured against this yardstick of Modiin as opposed to Meron, Zerubavel concluded, the editors of *Yizkor* had failed. “The Exile [*Galut*], he wrote, “has entrenched itself deep in the Jewish soul and this book which was meant to be a call to Redemption [*kriat ha-geula*] demonstrates this fact too.”⁵⁷

And, indeed, both Alexander Ziskind Rabinovich and Rabi Binyamin made it clear in *Yizkor* and in their subsequent comments that, as they

⁵⁵ Zerubavel, “‘Yizkor’ (shivre raayonot),” *Ha-abdut*, no. 11–12 (12 Tevet 5672/2 January 1912), pp. 30–31. On the traditional Jewish attitude to history and historiography see e.g. Y.H. Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle, 1982.)

⁵⁶ *Ha-abdut*, no. 11–12 (12 Tevet 5672/2 January 1912), pp. 33–34.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 13, p. 17.

saw it, the Second Aliya neither could nor should make so radical a break with Jewish history, tradition as it had developed in the Exile. In their conception, even the book itself was designed to encourage a free interweaving of continuities and discontinuities.

Thus, Rabinovich could add a footnote to the article of Joshua Thon in order to dissent from the latter's view that the guards had given their lives not because of the past but for the sake of the future alone, not for "the land of the fathers" (*eretz avot*) but for that of "the sons" (*eretz ha-banim*). It was neither necessary nor possible, Rabinovich responded, to separate these two concepts. "On the contrary, because it is the land of the fathers, the sons are returning to work it. And in the past there were many who sacrificed their lives simply because it was the land of the fathers. Yehuda Ha-Levi was not alone in this respect."⁵⁸

Again, his decision to include a long article in the book on Safed, on the kabbalists and their customs (including the pilgrimages to Meron), could be seen as another way of making the same point.⁵⁹ In the summer of 1912 (when responding to criticism by Brenner), he made it clear that, as far as he was concerned, the young guards who had been killed had won the right to a special memorial because according to Jewish tradition they could be considered to have died a holy death, to be *kdoshim*. To die violently (*mita meshuna*) was sufficient to enter this category and there could certainly be no doubt with regard to those youngsters who had "endangered their lives in order to work our holy land."⁶⁰

⁵⁸ *Yizkor*, p. 20, note. In 1912, Chaim Tchernowitz (Rav Tsair), following a visit to Palestine, noted the fact that the rejection of the Galut had become a key factor in modern education there as nationalism replaced religion as the central didactic motif. "Only one thing," he wrote, "is clear to them [the teachers]: the old values have to be put aside and replaced by new values which are entirely national. But what are national values? A love for the past, perhaps? But the past is the Exile [*galut*]... [So some try] to create a Jewish type based on the period of the First Temple, on a Jethah, ... or a Samson, who lives by his sword and his bravery... This method is enthusiastically adopted by most of the teachers... who arrange rambles, olympic-type meets... and jousts in order to bring them [the children] up like Gideon, Jethah and Samson, and they even try to teach the Bible from this point of view." Chaim Tchernowitz, "Rishme erets-yisrael: matsav ha-hinukh," *Ha-olam*, no. 11 (19 June/2 July 1912), pp. 3-4.

⁵⁹ Asher Ben-Yisrael, "Mishkan ha-kabala (matsevet zikaron le-hayim atikim be-erets avot)," *Yizkor*, pp. 85-98.

⁶⁰ A.Z. Rabinovich, "Al ha-noonakhim," *Ha-poel ha-tsair*, no. 19-20 (12 July 1912), p. 9. cf. Yisrael Halperin, who notes that: "Every Jew who was killed as a Jew in the Middle Ages was considered holy [*nitkadesh*]." *Sefer ha-gvura*, ed. Y. Halperin, vol. 1 (Tel Aviv, 1941), p. xv. On Jewish martyrology, see Shimon Bernfeld, *Sefer ha-dmaot*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1924).

Rabi Binyamin made very much the same kind of point, although with a different emphasis. Zerubavel, he admitted, was right to notice that *Yizkor* carried the mark of Exile, but it could not be otherwise:

The history of two thousand or more years cannot be simply wiped out by a mere phrase or by mere will . . . The soul does not change just because one moves from one place to another. We owe a debt of gratitude to the editors of the book for not having tried to put on a disguise, for not having tried to hide themselves behind cheap phrases in order to play a part in the Redemption [*Geula*].⁶¹

Thus in the historiographical, as in the political, sphere, the gap dividing Radler-Feldman (here speaking for the editorial committee) and Zerubavel had its origins in two highly disparate visions of the Zionist enterprise. In the last resort, though, what lent Zerubavel's critique of *Yizkor* its special energy was his belief that the editors had missed a unique opportunity to infuse the volume as a whole with the spirit of a purposeful and single-minded didacticism. What should have been done, in his view, was to ensure that the disparate contributions all meshed together to produce a single and inspiring picture of the life lived by those who had been killed and by those still at work in the fields or on guard. The individual portraits (of Shveiger, Korngold, Plotkin) written by Rabi Binyamin, Yaakov Rabinovich and, above all, Yitshak Ben Zvi were, he granted, admirable in themselves, but they did not bring out the typical. Far more effective was the short note of Yisrael Giladi on his comrade, Nisanov, one *shomer* describing another. ("The character of Yehezkel Nisanov emerges so much more sharply, so much clearer, from the ordinary remark he made, as reported by his comrade: 'How is it that you are still alive and your animals are gone? Shame on you!'") Here, wrote Zerubavel, "is revealed the image of the guard [*ha-shomer*] in his glory [*be-hadaro*] – his own image and that of the other workers, his comrades, the fallen."⁶²

Nothing could have been more effective, he granted, than to open the book, as the editors did, with the first word of the prayer possessing the greatest popular resonance in the Jewish liturgy and then to follow it up by a new phrase which totally revolutionized the original meaning. In place of the words handed down from time immemorial, "Let God remember"

⁶¹ R. Binyamin, "Al-odot 'yizkor,'" *Ha-poel ha-tsair*, no. 8 (24 January 1912), p. 12.

⁶² Zerubavel, "Yizkor (shivre raayonot)," *Ha-ahdut*, no. 13 (19 Tevet 5672/9 January 1912), p. 19.

came, "Let the People of Israel remember." ("Yizkor... yizkor na 'am yisrael). "This," he wrote,

is a new *yizkor* directed not to Heaven but to the Jewish people, not a prayer, not a supplication but a demand. Let the Jewish people remember and know how a few among its sons lived a life worthy of the name – and fell in battle... Let the memory of the heroes reach into every Jewish home where the spirit of the Galut is felt.

However, he concluded, the work itself had not lived up to this expectation: "The people who brought out this book did not remember. They forgot. They did not remember how those who were killed lived nor how they fell."⁶³

No real attempt was made by the editors to respond to this particular line of attack, although Radler-Feldman did point out that repeated and largely futile efforts had been made to coax articles about the dead men out of their friends and comrades. In order to gain an understanding of an approach essentially opposed here to that of Zerubavel, it is necessary to turn to Yosef Haim Brenner. All the circumstantial evidence suggests that Brenner resigned as co-editor of *Yizkor* out of a growing sense of revulsion against the readiness of A.Z. Rabinovich to include (and indeed to write) material which he felt smacked either of hagiography or of mythologizing.

One of the most intriguing features of Brenner's role in the *Yizkor* episode was that long before he accepted his appointment as co-editor of the volume, he had found an opportunity to dissociate himself from any attempt to read world-historical significance into the tragic death of the young guards in Galilee or to transmogrify them into instant martyrs or heroes.

In the novel which he published in Warsaw in 1910, *Between the Waters* (*Ben mayim le-mayim*), Brenner had described in thinly veiled terms one of the public meetings called by the young workers to mourn the death of Berele Shveiger in Galilee in the spring of that year.⁶⁴ He drew a picture of the hushed and depressed atmosphere in the hall of

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁶⁴ For contemporary reactions to the death of Shveiger, Korngold and Melamed in the spring of 1909, see e.g. the mourning notice put out by Poale Zion and headed: "Comrades and Brothers." Among other things, it declared: "The best among us are falling victim to the barbaric attacks [*hets ha-pera*] of the Arabs. We have to ask: Where are you, the heirs to the Maccabees, the descendants of Bar Giora and Bar Kochba? Come to take the place of the fallen heroes." The Ben Zvi papers. AMJLM, IV/104/52. Cf. "Al kvarim hadashim," *Ha-poel ha-tsair*, no. 12 (23 April 1909), p. 16; and Sh.R., "Yafo: yediot

the Bet Ha-Am (People’s Club) in Jerusalem, of the woman crying in the corner (“She was neurotic and was always talking about how essential it was to win over the Oriental Jews in general and especially the Kurds and Moroccans whom she loved in particular”), and he then went on to describe what was said there. “These speeches,” he wrote,

in no way concentrated on the sadness of it all, on the fact that somebody had gone never to return, on the life brought to an end like this without any sense or meaning, on the forlorn existence of one particular man who had been alive (an existence lost and gone without reward), on the final riddle and all-embracing tragedy . . . Rather, they spoke words of consolation . . . The chairman, an old Zionist organizer, did not say: “He’s dead and soon I’ll be following him” . . . but linked the event to the idea of the Rebirth [*ba-tehiya*] and consoled . . . everybody with high-flown phrases about the fact that the young hero had not been killed in the blood-soaked country we had left behind [Russia], but rather had fallen on the fields of Israel – the fields walked throughout the ages by our Prophets and heroes.

Somebody else . . . spoke about how we should learn from this and set our course accordingly – that is to say, a militia, . . . armaments (. . . ah-ah!).

There was even somebody who tried to enter into the psychology of the Arabs and without actually justifying them from our point of view, nonetheless, suggested that they too are right.

One felt that the truth, the truth of reality, was floating away somewhere overhead hidden behind that special assumption of “chosen-ness” [*ba-atah-behartanu*] which you find in this country . . . ⁶⁵

If, despite all this, Brenner nonetheless decided to take on the editorship of *Yizkor*, it must surely have been in order to ensure that whoever wanted to record his personal reminiscences about friends or comrades now dead would have the chance to do so in his own way. The article which Brenner wrote for, and then withdrew from, *Yizkor*, certainly was highly individual in character.

It opened with a short summary of the ideological reevaluations which had marked the history of the Russian Jews over the previous hundred years. The Haskala with its slogan of “Be a Jew at home and a man outside” had given way to Hibat Zion with its call to be “a Jew at home and a Jew outside.” Now the pioneers in Palestine had pledged their lives to the idea of living as “a man at home and a man abroad [and ready to do battle (*likrat ha-oyev*)].” True, “these few, simple Hebrews are a mere

mevuhadot,” *Ha-tsvi*, no. 154 (2 Iyar 5669/22 April 1909), which describes the speeches given at a memorial meeting called by the workers in Jaffa.

⁶⁵ Y.H. Brenner, *Ben mayim le-mayim* (Warsaw, 1910), pp. 54–56.

handful, but they are there. They are new, a new type among the Jews [*bne yisrael*].”⁶⁶

Brenner then proceeded to write in detail about two such individuals. One had been a guard and was killed; but the other (a certain Shmueli) had been a worker and had died of exhaustion and illness.⁶⁷ In making this choice, Brenner was clearly arguing against the idea (defended implicitly by A.Z. Rabinovich) that to be killed in combat places the victim in some special state of grace. When *Yizkor* was finally published, it was Rabinovich’s conception which prevailed (violent death at Arab hands was the criterion for inclusion in the book).

Of the *shomrim*, Brenner wrote, he had known only one, “but of the workers who have died as the result of their labor it has been my privilege to know a number and to know them better.” Brenner described a speech made by Shmueli at a conference of Ha-Poel Ha-Tsair in 1910 where he had called on those assembled there not to abandon the idea of Jews becoming agricultural laborers. He spoke

with pauses, stuttering, as if to himself, diffidently (something along the lines of “I shall make thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth” from Ezekiel), but he talked consistently, clearly and with an extreme obstinacy, a sort of Amos (“I was a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore trees . . .”) He spoke out: “If I find five . . . if I find one righteous man . . . I shall save the entire place . . . Thus it was said unto Abraham . . . Let everybody do his work! . . . It is not in our hands to save the nation . . . Perhaps the Almighty One [*ha-meyuhas*] no longer wants the Redemption . . . Perhaps He wants it but does not have the strength for it . . . Let each one of us save himself . . . The labor of each one of us redeems ourselves . . . creates soil under our feet . . .”

He spoke of one righteous man [*tsadik*], but, of course, that was his gloss . . . Genesis talks of ten . . . He was that one man, one of the Jews [*ha-yehudim*], a man of everyday reality.⁶⁸

Almost a year later, in June 1912 (again in *Ha-poel ha-tsair*), Brenner returned to the subject of *Yizkor*, this time making his reservations explicit. True, he spoke more in sorrow than in anger and (employing the genre of the dialogue) put most of his criticism into the mouth of a putative friend. He had, after all, great respect for, and was on close

⁶⁶ Y.H. Brenner, “Tsiyunim,” *Ha-poel ha-tsair*, no. 22 (28 August, 1911), pp. 7–8.

⁶⁷ Shmueli sent reports and correspondence for *Ha-poel ha-tsair* from the colonies where he worked. His *nom de plume* was Mamashi; his original name, Menahem Mendel Shmuelevich.

⁶⁸ Y.H. Brenner, “Tsiyunim,” *Ha-poel ha-tsair*, no. 22 (28 August 1911), p. 8. The Biblical references here are to Ezekiel 3: 26; Amos 7:16; and Genesis 18: 32.

terms with, Alexander Ziskind Rabinovich.⁶⁹ In all probability, though, he had decided that following what was by then a decent interval, the time had come to explain why he had resigned from the co-editorship.

A major problem about life in the *Yishuv*, he wrote, was the tendency to observe the present not as existing in itself, but only as an aspect of the distant past and the promised future. As a result, for “every grain of actual work or reality there are nine times as many declarations, nerve-shattering statements and endless talk.” The *Yishuv* was not perceived for what it was – a few thousand Jews living their lives much as the twelve million Jews did elsewhere – but rather, “without any justification,” as “the elite, the saviors of the nation.” Was it surprising, he asked, if “people who see themselves as always standing before the judgement of History and of the Future become highly nervous?” As for *Yizkor*,

this small book shows *how over hasty we are to make history*, how we rush to sanctify things which can be sanctified only over the space of generations... Granted that we, the writers and intelligentsia in this country, are nothing compared with the hundreds of people who are living as workers in the hills of Judeah and Galilee and are guarding our colonies against enemies seeking vengeance... Yet nonetheless, they are few, very few in number, and among them not all live up to their ideals. After all, we ourselves actually knew the four or five who fell... Can we turn their lives into a legend [*agada*], a legend of saints [*kdoshim*] and martyrs [*meunim*]? Can we do that without blanching?

Among the dead recalled in the book; among those not recalled there; and, still more, among those still alive there are individuals in whom even nations, more profound than we are, could take pride. But do we not do them an injustice if we make too much of them in public?⁷⁰

He closed this article with a plea for a different tone in public discourse: “If only a few real steps could be taken away from prying eyes. What a blessing that would be. If only the waters could flow hidden, truly hidden.”⁷¹

Some years after the publication of *Yizkor*, Zerubavel found himself in a position to bring out a memorial volume constructed very much along the lines envisaged in his fierce critique of 1912. Forced by war-time exigencies to move temporarily to the United States, he was able to put

⁶⁹ See e.g. A.Z. Rabinovich, “Dvarim le-ahar heratsho,” in M. Kushnir (Shnir), *Yosef Haim Brenner: mi'vhar divre zikbronot* (Tel Aviv, 1971), p. 300.

⁷⁰ Bar Yohai [Brenner], “Gam ele anahot sofer,” *Ha-poel ha-tsair*, no. 18 (21 June 1912) p. 11. For Brenner’s view in this period of the role of martyrs and martyrology in Jewish history, see “Miluim,” *Revivim*, vol. 5 (Jerusalem, 1912), pp. 112–16.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

his stamp on a new version of *Yizkor*, published in New York in 1916.⁷² Like the earlier book, it was dedicated essentially to members of the Second Aliya, killed by Arabs, but this time it was in Yiddish. The other two editors, Yitshak Ben Zvi and Alexander Khashin (Zvi Averbuch), had likewise crossed the Atlantic as temporary exiles from Palestine.

Unlike the Hebrew original, the Yiddish variation did not have a non-party character. It was published by the Poale Zion Palestine Committee in the USA; the proceeds were to go to the Palestine Labor Fund (run by the party); and the three editors were all party activists. Nothing remained of the literary section which had made up the bulk of the original. The editorial note of 1911 had been replaced by a longer (unsigned) introductory essay which, on examination, turns out to be a translation, slightly altered, of Zerubavel's article in *Ha-abdut* which opposed Modiin to Meron, the active heroism of the *Geula* to the passive martyrdom of the *Galut*. (On the cover was depicted a guard in Arab headdress, mounted on a stallion with a rifle slung across the horse's neck. The 1911 edition had been in plain black.)

For the most part the book was now made up of biographical articles and notes on the dead ("guards" [*vekhter*] as well as "workers" were now specifically mentioned on the title page). The list of those killed had more than doubled since 1911, and, taken altogether, the various accounts and reminiscences did, perhaps, add up to something like the collective portrait which Zerubavel had found so lacking in the Hebrew volume. A long piece by Ben Gurion, "From Petah Tikva to Sejera," which interwove autobiography with selected themes from Second Aliya history, added to the sense of a much greater inner unity.

Nevertheless, even though the new *Yisker* was a Poale Zion publication inspired by a strong spirit of didacticism, it had certainly not become a narrow work of organizational partisanship. The reminiscences of Yaakov Rabinovich and Rabi Binyamin were retained from the 1911 edition. And the article by Brenner which he himself had withdrawn from the Hebrew version was now included. Clearly, the Poale Zion group was not seeking to "mark itself off" in Bolshevik style; but, rather, in catholic spirit, was laying claim to the entire heritage and achievement of the Second Aliya. (The emphasis on individual *Shomrim* and workers made it easy to pass with hardly a word over the role of organizations such as Ha-Poel Ha-Tsair and Ha-Shomer which represented an actual or potential threat.)

⁷² *Yisker: tsum ondenken fun di gefalene vekhter un arbeter in erets-yisroel*, ed. Zerubavel, Y. Ben Zvi, A. Khashin (New York, 1916).

Within a few weeks of its publication, *Yisker* in Yiddish had sold out. (The first printing was in 3 500 copies.)⁷³ And no time was lost in the production of a second edition. This time, though, Ben Gurion was the chief editor (Zerubavel and Ben Zvi were absent from New York when the new editorial board was chosen), and he made some basic changes. Most notably, Zerubavel's (unsigned) introduction was removed and replaced by a shorter preface. And Ben Gurion's article was brought from the back to the front of the new edition. Ben Gurion was absolutely adamant in insisting on the total excision of Zerubavel's article, which he described as "self-inflated and would-be-poetic journalism" and which Khashin called "barbaric – it infuriates everybody with the slightest taste or sense."⁷⁴

However, even though the new preface was shorter than Zerubavel's and written in more disciplined prose, it was not as free of high flown, even mystical, language, as might have been expected from these comments. True, more emphasis was placed on the defensive spirit of the guards ("For all their profound hatred of violence and force, they were compelled to take up the sword in order to defend the property, honor and worth of their people").⁷⁵ At the same time, though, Ben Gurion and Khashin pronounced that "to act as guard in Eretz Yisrael is the boldest and freest deed [*tat*] of Zionism."⁷⁶

The sweat of those working the fields and the blood of those killed on guard mix together in the stream of new Jewish life. It is this blood which awakens our past, inspires our present and, above all, invigorates our *future* . . .

The fallen are near and dear to the people [*folk*] because they are bone of its bone, flesh of its flesh . . . They are not heroes who happen to be Jewish, but *Jewish* heroes . . . In the midst of this grey, ordinary, every-day Jewish world, their deaths are a cause for hope [*yontevdike meysim*].⁷⁷

⁷³ For a detailed, and most interesting, description of the publication process of *Yisker* in New York, see Shabtai Tevet, *Kinat David: Ben Gurion ha-tsair* (Tel Aviv, 1976), pp. 339–357. The success of the Yiddish edition can be gauged by the fact that the *Forverts* devoted a full-scale and highly critical article to it. Olgin, "Di yidishe kolonyes in palestine zaynen geboyt oyf umglyk fun di araber – un di araber firen a bitere milkhome gegen di yiden. Gedanken vegen tsiyonistishe bukh, 'yisker'," *Forverts* (3 June 1916).

⁷⁴ S. Tevet, *Kinat David*, pp. 345, 350.

⁷⁵ *Yisker: tsveyte fargreserte oyflage*, ed. A. Khashin and D. Ben Gurion (New York, 1916), p. 10. It should be noted, though, that Khashin and Ben Gurion were at pains to depict the Arab attacks as the result of robbery rather than of national conflict. Galilee was described as a "half-deserted region where the Beduin roam and where the Arab masses who live there have respect only for the hand which can defend itself." It is probable that attacks, such as Olgin's, from the "internationalist" wing of the socialist movement had brought home the problems involved in stressing the skirmishes in Palestine as the result of a basic conflict between two nations. (Ben Gurion had written a reply to Olgin which was so sharp that Leon Khazanovich, the editor of the Poale Zion journal, *Der yidishe kemfer*, refused to publish it.)

⁷⁶ *Yisker: tsveyte fargreserte oyflage*, p. 9. ⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

The second Yiddish edition sold extraordinarily well (over 14,000 copies in a period of months). In 1918, two *Yizkor* books were published in Europe: a Yiddish edition in Lodz; and a German edition in Berlin.⁷⁸ Both these publications followed the content of the New York editions closely, but the introductions were new (and pitched at a lower key), the one written by Shmarya Levin, the other by Martin Buber.

The powerful myths which took shape during the Second Aliya acted as only one among a number of important factors in the later development of Jewish nationalism in the *Yishuv*. True, the images of blood and soil, of sheer heroism⁷⁹ as the negation of *Galut* (Exile) and guarantee of *Geulah* (Redemption); of the new man as direct heir to the warriors of ancient times (Judas Maccabeus, Bar Kochba) had established a firm grip on the collective psyche by 1914. It would be hard to exaggerate the power and the resonance of these symbolic codes. Their importance was rendered still greater because they had taken hold particularly in the Poale Zion party, which was to produce so many of the dominant leaders of the labor movement and the *Yishuv*.

Nonetheless, there is no doubt that there was profound resistance within the Second Aliya itself to this particular set of myths. In some cases, opposition expressed itself in symbolisms of a contrary type (Rabi Binyamin's Semitic fraternity; Alexander Ziskind Rabinovich's fidelity to the traditional image of the "martyr" or "saint"). For his part, Brenner (and he spoke for an important strand of opinion) expressed a dogged scepticism when faced by a politics translated into hagiography or mythology.

No less important is the fact that mythologies do not work their influence in a vacuum. Their power depends on a combination of ideological,

⁷⁸ *"Yisker": a denkmal de gefalene shomrim un arbeter in erets-yisroel* (Lodz, 1918); *Jiskor: ein Buch des Gedenkens an gefallene Wächter und Arbeiter im Lande Israel, Mit einem Gedenkwort von Martin Buber* (Berlin, 1918). A second edition was published in 1920, trans. Gershom Scholem.

⁷⁹ A full-scale analysis of national myths in the Second Aliya would require an extensive examination of the contemporary background: nationalism in Europe in the period prior to the First World War. See e.g. George Kennan, who notes "the survival into those decades of the romantic chivalric concept of military conflict: the notion that whether you won or lost depended only on your bravery, your determination, your sense of righteousness, and your skill. In this view, warfare became a test of young manhood, a demonstration of courage and virility, a proving-ground for virtue, for love of country, for national quality." *The Decline of Bismarck's European Order: Franco-Russian Relations 1875-1890* (Princeton, 1980), pp. 423-24. Cf. George L. Mosse, "National Cemeteries and National Revival: The Cult of the Fallen Soldiers in Germany," *Journal of Contemporary History* 14 (1979), 1-20.

organizational, historical, socio-political, and contextual factors. It is ironic to note that of the editors of the Poale Zion *Yisker* books, with their clearly nationalist thrust, Khashin soon became a Communist, while Zerubavel emerged after the First World War as a leader of the pro-Communist Left Poale Zion in Poland, once again an orthodox Borochovist. And Ha-Shomer Ha-Tsair, which no doubt took its name (partly, at least) under the impact of the *Yisker* books, published and republished between 1916 and 1920, developed as a bulwark against nationalist maximalism.

The mythology recorded by Zerubavel during the *Yizkor* controversy of 1912 represented an important part of the political legacy passed on by the Second Aliya. It made the emergence of the most extreme forms of nationalism within the labor movement a possibility. Potentialities are not necessities, but they are none the less important for that.

The Bundists in America and the “Zionist Problem”

Within a few years of its foundation in 1897, the Bund emerged, if only for a brief moment, as the most prominent political force in the Russian Jewish world. It took the lead and set the tone during the revolutionary year of 1905. With tens of thousands of members, the Bund served as a model which other Jewish parties of the Left (autonomist, Zionist, territorialist) sought, with varying degrees of success, to imitate.¹ In 1917, the Bund was cut off from much of its constituency by the German conquest of Poland and Lithuania. Nonetheless, it again played a significant role in both the stormy politics of Russia at large and in internal Jewish affairs. Most specifically, it took the lead in the attempt to call together a democratically elected Jewish national assembly.² Bundists – Mark Lieber (the “defensist”) and Rafael Abramovich (the “internationalist”), for example – were among the most influential figures in the Petrograd Soviet between February and October 1917. Outlawed in Communist Russia in 1921, the Bund was able, despite profound inner conflicts, to reconstitute itself in independent Poland and in 1936–1939 once again, as in 1905, won

¹ See, for example, Henry J. Tobias, *The Jewish Bund in Russia from Its Origins to 1905* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972), 221–343; J. S. Hertz, ed., *Di geshikhthe fun bund* vol. 2 (New York: Unzer Tsayt, 1962), 9–482.

² On the Bund during the Russian revolution of 1917, see Arye Gelbard, *Ha-“Bund” ha-Rusi bi-shenat ha-mahpekkhot 1917: te’udot ve-hablatot/behedir ve-hosif mavo ve-be’arot* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1984); *Bi-se’arat ha-yamim, ha-Bund ha-rusi be-’itot mahapekha* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1987); J. S. Hertz, ed., *Di geshikhthe fun bund* vol. 3 (New York: Unzer Tsayt, 1966), 81–188.

Previously published in Zvi Gitelman (ed.), *The Emergence of Modern Jewish Politics: Bundism and Zionism in Eastern Europe* (Pittsburgh, 2003), pp. 181–95.

for itself a leading, even dominant, position in the arena of Jewish party politics.³

It may seem surprising that a party that prided itself on its allegiance to orthodox Marxism and the doctrine of class war was able (if only periodically) to gain such support from a people still largely traditionalist in its way of life and habits of thought. Perhaps this can best be explained as resulting from a complex combination of factors. First, the Bundist ideology, for all its sectarian and schismatic characteristics, still fused the utopian and quasi-messianic appeal of revolutionary socialism with a nationalism grounded in the urgent need to win Jewish self-determination not far away in space or time but, rather, in the here and now. This dual message could hardly fail to have a ready appeal, albeit at only certain moments, to a population made up largely of workers, artisans, and casual laborers suffering from impoverishment and overcrowding, low wages, excessively long hours, and chronic economic insecurity.⁴ The fact that the Jews of the Polish-Russian borderlands (Lithuania, Belorussia, Galicia, Ukraine) were one of a number of linguistically differentiated peoples living in a multinational environment also served to increase the attraction of Bundism. Cultural-national autonomy was seen as a logical enough demand in a still predominantly Yiddish-speaking context. To these objective factors one must add the remarkable ability of the Bund to create for its members and supporters something of an all-encompassing subculture that combined political activism with support for party-oriented trade unions, schools, publishing houses, newspapers and journals, youth groups, and social services. At its best, the Bund was considered something of an extended family. Finally, there was the fact that the Bund was perceived as particularly well constituted to defend Jewish interests in times of immediate challenge or threat. Its underground

³ For the Bundist position in Poland during the late 1930s: Bernard K. Johnpoll, *The Politics of Futility: The General Jewish Workers Bund of Poland 1917-1943* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1967), 204-24; Abraham Brumberg, "The Bund and the Polish Socialist Party in the Late 1930s," in *The Jews of Poland Between Two World Wars*, ed. Yisrael Gutman, Ezra Mendelsohn, Jehuda Reinharz, and Chone Shmeruk (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1989), 75-94; Daniel Blatman, "The Bund in Poland, 1935-1939," *Polin* 9 (1996): 58-82; Leonard Rowe, "Jewish Self-Defense: A Response to Violence," in Joshua A. Fishman, *Studies in Polish Jewry 1919-1939* (New York: YIVO, 1974), 105-49.

⁴ Sec, for example, Arcadius Kahan, "The Impact of Industrialization in Tsarist Russia on the Socioeconomic Conditions of the Jewish Population," in *Essays in Jewish Social and Economic History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 1-69.

experience equipped it to organize armed self-defense against pogroms, and its ties to fraternal socialist parties (the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party in 1905 and 1917; the PPS in interwar Poland) promised an escape route from Jewish isolation in moments of crisis.

In the wake of the mass immigration of Jews from the Russian Empire before the First World War, it was only natural that an organization inspired by, and largely modeled on, the Bund should have been established in the United States. The Jewish Socialist Federation was set up in 1912 by veterans of the Bundist movement and, like the Bund, was constituted as a subunit within a broader multiethnic framework, the Socialist Party of America. Also like the Bund, it sought to combine its socialist message with an emphasis on Jewish pride, meaning the cultivation of Yiddish language and culture.⁵ For all its vicissitudes (and a name change in the 1920s), this organization would play a significant role in the American Jewish labor movement, and hence in American Jewish life as a whole, until after the Second World War.

In retrospect, however, it is obvious that there was no realistic chance for the Federation to reproduce the measure of relative success achieved by the Bund in the tsarist empire and later in independent Poland. The immigration law of 1924 would eventually cut off the flow of reinforcements, leaving the movement exposed to inexorable erosion by deep-running socioeconomic forces. These included the upward socioeconomic mobility that constantly depleted the ranks of the Jewish proletariat and the residential mobility that attenuated group cohesion.⁶

The truth is that from the very start the Federation faced almost insurmountable hurdles. Clearly, the idea of Jewish cultural-national autonomy underwritten by the state had no place in America and was never proposed by the Federation. Even the call for the reinforcement of Yiddish could have only limited appeal in an immigrant community that was determined to see at least the younger generation rapidly acquire a complete mastery of English. For all the talk in the Progressive era of

⁵ On the Jewish Socialist Federation, see Eugene Victor Orenstein, "The Jewish Socialist Federation of America 1912-1921: A Study of Integration and Particularism in the American Jewish Labor Movement" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1978); J. S. Hertz, *Di yidishe sotsyalistishe bavegung in amerike* (New York: Der Veker, 1954), 139-60; Melech Epstein, *Jewish Labor in the U.S.A: An Industrial, Political and Cultural History of the Jewish Labor Movement*, 2 vols. (New York: Trade Union Sponsoring Committee, 1950), 1:350-51; Arthur Liebman, *Jews and the Left* (New York: Wiley, 1979), 482-85.

⁶ For an early analysis of socioeconomic mobility among the immigrant population, see Chaim Zhitlovsky, "Der antisemitizm un di yidishe parteyen," *Dos naye leben* (August 1912): 5-13.

"cultural pluralism," the melting pot remained the norm of everyday life. And, of course, there was no room in the United States for an armed vanguard of Jewish people either to counter pogroms or to prepare for violent revolution. In the practical and everyday terms that were of overriding concern to the immigrants who arrived penniless in America, the Federation had almost nothing to offer. The Socialist Party, as a third force in a two-party system, could not compete with the big city political machines of the Tammany Hall variety, either in the distribution of carrots (contracts, jobs) or in the wielding of sticks (the withdrawal of permits, the imposition of fines). Moreover, within the Jewish labor movement, the Bundists had arrived too late. It was the generation of socialists, anarchists, and populists who had reached America in the 1880s that had set in place the institutions that would meet the basic needs of the post-1905 immigration. Those trade unions in which Jewish workers predominated were grouped under or around the United Hebrew Trades, an umbrella organization founded in 1888; insurance could be obtained via the Workmen's Circle (the Arbeter Ring) set up in 1892; and for news there was the socialist Yiddish daily, *Forverts*, established in 1897.⁷

It was thus only logical that the Bundist immigration to the United States made its most dramatic impact not so much in organizational terms, through the Jewish Social Federation, but rather through its individual graduates who, facing the challenge of the New World, struck out in various, often radically opposed, directions. From among the thousands of Bundists who arrived in America (their exact number cannot be known) many became publicly prominent, winning real fame in some cases and no small measure of notoriety in others. Nothing else was to have been expected. They were, after all, mainly members of the 1905 generation, their formative years indelibly stamped by the revolutionary experience in the Russian Empire. Strikes, demonstrations, sudden mobilization of mass support, the burgeoning of political activity and party rivalry, a clandestine and semilegal press, pogroms and self-defense units, gunrunning, street clashes with Cossacks, highly attended political funerals, arrests, imprisonments and the years of exile in Siberia – all this could not but produce a crop of young people with political experience and skills totally unprecedented in modern Jewish history. The heady

⁷ On the initial development of the Jewish labor movement in the United States, see Eliyohu Cherikover, ed., *Geshikhte fun der yidisher arbeter bavegung in di fareynikte shtatn* vol. 2 (New York: 1945), 319–417; Gerald Sorin, *The Prophetic Minority: American Jewish Immigrant Radicals 1880–1920* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1985), 72–123; Epstein, *Jewish Labor in the U.S.A.*, 1:132–91; 253–334.

mix of revolutionary utopianism so central to Russian socialism with the “redemptionism” inherent in the Jewish expectations of emancipation – whether socialist or national or both – proved to be an inexhaustible source of political energy.⁸

Thus, the Bundists in America have to be seen as an integral part of a generation of Jews who, recruited into the world of radical politics, would attain positions of influence and power – in Palestine, changing the course of Jewish history; in Russia, even perhaps that of world history. For obvious reasons, that generation tended to be very closely clustered in age. To illustrate this fact, it is perhaps worth mentioning some dozen of the better-known Jewish veterans of 1905, those who were contemporaries of the American Bundists, but stayed in Eastern Europe or went to Palestine. Of the Russian revolutionary leaders, Abram Rafailovich Gotz was born in 1882, Lev Kamenev in 1883, Lev (Leon) Trotsky in 1879, Grigori Zinoviev in 1883; of the Bundists, Borekh (Virgily) Cohen in 1883, Henryk Erlich in 1882, Mark Lieber in 1880, Vladimir Medem in 1879; and of the Second Aliyah activists, Ben-Gurion in 1886, Berl Katznelson in 1887, Manya Shokhat (Vilbushevich) in 1880, and Yitzhak Tabenkin in 1887.

Arriving very young in America, the Bundists still had their lives before them. Their enormous energy and varying degrees of ideological fervor were bound in most, though not all, cases to seek broader fields of action than those offered by the Jewish Socialist Federation. Some made a name for themselves as mainstream American politicians, most notably perhaps Baruch Vladeck. Born near Minsk in 1886, he ended up as the majority leader of the New York City Council, representing the American Labor Party in the days of Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia and District Attorney Thomas Dewey. (Vladeck's brothers were Shmuel Niger and David Charney, both very prominent in the world of Yiddish letters.) Others, such as Moishe Olgin, born in Odessa in 1878, and Alexander Bittelman, born near Kiev in 1890, moved in the opposite direction, serving as top

⁸ On the Russian revolution of 1905, in general: Abraham Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905*, 2 vols. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992); Sidney Harcave, *First Blood: The Russian Revolution of 1905* (New York: Macmillan: 1964); Howard D. Mehlinger and John M. Thompson, *Count Witte and the Tsarist Government in the 1905 Revolution* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1972); Walter Sablinsky, *The Road to Bloody Sunday: Father Gapon and the St. Petersburg Massacre of 1905* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976). On the role of the Jewish parties, in particular: Yehuda Slutsky, “Shnat 1905 bekhayehem shel yehudei rusya,” *He'avar* vol. 22 (1977): 3–23; Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism and the Russian Jews 1862–1917* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 134–70.

leaders of the American Communist Party in the interwar period and even beyond. Many of the best-known names in the left-wing Yiddish press were graduates of the Bund, among them Ben-Zion Hoffman (Zivion), born in Courland in 1874, and Gavriel Krechmer (Liliput), born in Riga in 1883, both associated primarily with *Forverts*. Pesach (Paul) Novick, born in 1891, was from the first a central figure on the editorial board of the Communist newspaper *Frayheyt*. Fishl Gelibter, born in Zamosc in 1884, served as the executive secretary of the Workmen's Circle from 1915–1926, and Joseph Baskin, born near Minsk in 1880, was its general secretary from 1917–1952.⁹

Between the wars, graduates of the Bund stood at the head of the two most powerful unions in the needle trades. Sidney Hillman (born in Lithuania in 1887) was president of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, and David Dubinsky (born in 1892 in Brest-Litovsk) was president of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (the ILGWU). Between them, the two unions claimed a membership in the 1940s of some three-quarters of a million. Both men became closely associated with the politics of Roosevelt's New Deal, and during the Second World War Hillman was appointed director of the labor division of the War Production Board.¹⁰ Legend has it that he had the last and decisive voice in Roosevelt's selection of Harry S. Truman as his vice-presidential running mate, with the president reputedly telling his associates at the crucial moment on July 14, 1944, to "clear it with Sidney."¹¹

Many Bundists who had settled in the United States joined the stream of émigré socialists who returned to Russia following the February Revolution of 1917. Some, such as A. Litvak and Pesach Novick, eventually found their way back to New York. But others threw in their lot with the Soviet regime during the Civil War. Max Goldfarb (Lipets) (born in Berdichev in 1883) had served in America as a leader of the Jewish Socialist Federation, but back in Russia he rapidly rose to high rank in the Red Army and, as General Petrovskii, was appointed to a key post in the Moscow military academy; in the late 1930s he fell victim to the

⁹ For biographical details on Bundists and ex-Bundists, see, for example, J. S. Hertz, ed., *Doyres bundistn*. 3 vols. (New York: 1956–68); Shmuel Niger and Jacob Shatzky, eds., *Leksikon fun der nayer yidisher literature*, 8 vols. (New York: Alveltlekher Yidishn Kultur Kongres, 1956–81).

¹⁰ See, for example, Max D. Danish, *The World of David Dubinsky* (Cleveland: The World Publishing Co., 1957) and Matthew Josephson, *Sidney Hillman: Statesman of American Labor* (New York: Doubleday, 1952).

¹¹ David McCullough, *Truman* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993), 310, 330.

purges.¹² Shakhne Epstein, another prominent member of the Federation until returning to Russia, had a still more bizarre career, serving as an editor of Communist papers in Yiddish both in America (he was back in New York in the 1920s) and in the Soviet Union. He was also reputedly a spy who even organized (so it is said) the liquidation of a renegade comrade in the United States. Finally, he served as a central figure in the wartime Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee.¹³

Of course, not all the well-known veterans of the Bund who ended up in the United States arrived between 1906 and 1914. Vladimir Medem, for example, reached New York in 1921, causing a constant stir with his demands that the Jewish socialist movement have no truck with either Soviet Communism or Zionism. Rafael Abramovich (born 1880), David Einhorn, the poet (born 1886), Grigorii Aronson (born 1887), and Shloyme Mendelson (born 1896) – together with the founding fathers of Bundism, Noakh Portnoi and Vladimir Kossovskii – were all plucked out of Europe, with the help of the Jewish Labor Committee, at the very last moment in 1940–1941.¹⁴

What can be seen as obvious, even inevitable, in retrospect, was by no means so readily apparent to those involved at the time. During the first five years of its existence, the Jewish Socialist Federation appeared, at least to the more optimistic of its members, to be headed in an extremely positive direction and indeed on its way to becoming an American version of the Bund. The Socialist Party of America, under the leadership of Eugene Victor Debs, was growing by leaps and bounds; its membership, a mere 25,000 in 1905, had grown to 118,000 by 1912. In 1914 Meyer London was elected from the Lower East Side as the first socialist representative to the US Congress. On every side, the Jewish labor movement – the unions, the fraternal orders, the press – was expanding at an extraordinary rate, fed as it was by the huge influx of new immigrants in 1906–1914.¹⁵

But it was the First World War that promised to transform the Federation from a peripheral into a central or even, as some hoped, a hegemonic

¹² Zvi Gitelman, *Jewish Nationality and Soviet Politics: The Jewish Sections of the CPSU, 1917–1930* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 226.

¹³ Melech Epstein, *The Jew and Communism: The Story of Early Communist Victories and Ultimate Defeats in the Jewish Community, U.S.A. 1919–1941* (New York: Trade Union Sponsoring Committee 1960), 388–94.

¹⁴ Danish, *The World of David Dubinsky*, 270–71; Yidisher arbeter komitet, *Kamf, retung, oyfboy: barikht fun land-tsuzamenfor fun yidishn arbeter komitet* (December 18–20, 1942): 25.

¹⁵ Epstein, *Jewish Labor in the U.S.A.*, 1:335–420.

factor in the movement. The World War presented the Jewish socialists in America with a triple challenge. First, news began arriving in the winter of 1914–1915, that the tsarist army was engaged in the massive expulsion of Jews from the war zone. This clearly called for some kind of major protest from the labor movement. For the immigrant population what happened in Eastern Europe, in the *heym*, was in many ways more meaningful than anything occurring in America. After all, parents, siblings, or other very close relatives had often been left behind. Second, no sooner had the war started than mounting attention began to be focused on the issues of the postwar peace settlement. All around, the various immigrant communities – Czechs, Poles, Finns – were organizing in support of their respective national claims; vociferous demands were being made to have the American Jews do likewise on behalf of those Jewish populations in Europe which had hitherto been denied equal rights, most obviously in Russia and Romania.¹⁶ Finally, these two problems were inextricably linked to a third, internal, issue. The Zionist camp, under the new leadership of Louis Dembitz Brandeis and able to count on a suddenly invigorated Poalei Tsiyon, had been the first to respond to the crisis of the war with its demand for a democratically elected congress to give a single, united, powerful voice to American Jewry.¹⁷

There were some in the upper echelons of the Jewish labor movement – Avrom Lesin, for example – who were prepared to accept the call for unity at its face value and as a logical response to the crisis facing the Jews in Eastern Europe. But the dominant view was that the socialist camp had to guard its separate identity and resist the Zionist bid for hegemony in the American Jewish community. The labor movement should agitate in its own name in defense of Jewish interests abroad. In line with this reasoning, the National Workmen's Committee on Jewish Rights in the Belligerent Lands was established in April 1915.¹⁸ Here, then, was a development, as it seemed to many, that had finally provided the Jewish Socialist Federation with a key function to play, for it was only logical that the campaign in defense of the East European Jews should be directed by the graduates of the Bund. It was the Bund, after

¹⁶ Nahman Syrkin, *Yidisher kongres in amerike* (New York: 1915).

¹⁷ On the Jewish Congress movement in the United States, see Oscar Janowsky, *Jews and Minority Rights (1898–1919)* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1933), 159–90; Jonathan Frankel, "The Jewish Socialists and the American Jewish Congress Movement," in *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science*, vol. 16, *Essays on the American Jewish Labor Movement*, ed. Ezra Mendelsohn (New York: YIVO, 1976), 202–341.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 211–16.

all, which had inscribed the fight for Jewish rights in Russia and Poland, including national rights, at the center of its banner. The National Workmen's Committee had been constituted by the joint action of the unions (the United Hebrew Trades), the Arbeter Ring (the Workmen's Circle), *Forverts*, and the Jewish Socialist Federation. But it was to the leadership of the latter organization – Jacob Salutsky, Max Goldfarb, Moishe Olgin, and Shakhne Epstein (Bundists all) – that the direction of the new body naturally fell.

For close to two years, the strategy pursued by the National Workmen's Committee was marked by a very considerable degree of success (serving, *inter alia*, to raise the membership of the Jewish Socialist Federation from a mere two thousand in 1914 to some eight thousand in 1916).¹⁹ The ad hoc alliance that it established together with the American Jewish Committee proved powerful enough to halt what had been becoming a Zionist juggernaut in its tracks. It was eventually agreed that the American Jewish Congress, even though democratically elected, would have a strictly limited and predetermined agenda – the call for “full rights” for the Jews everywhere, including “group rights” in Eastern Europe and “Jewish rights” in Palestine – and thus block any chance of a Zionist takeover.²⁰

The decision to ally the labor movement (officially dedicated to the causes of class-war and democratization) with the American Jewish Committee (popularly identified with such plutocrats as Jacob Schiff) – an alliance often referred to as linking the *genossen* to the *yahudim* – caused some derisive comment.²¹ Nonetheless, the strategy had justified itself and 1916 undoubtedly constituted the high-water mark in the history of the Jewish Socialist Federation. Its subsequent decline was caused, as already suggested, primarily by objective factors beyond its control, but the initial blow was strictly self-inflicted. The setting where the Federation fatefully overplayed its hand was the second National Workmen's Convention that was held in February 1917 and could lay good claim to represent the entire mainstream labor movement. It was attended by 453 delegates representing 190 organizations, with Poalei Tsiyon, of course, excluded. The leadership of the Federation introduced a resolution calling for the

¹⁹ Hertz, *Di yidishe sotsyalistishe*, 140, 163, 194.

²⁰ Janowsky, *Jews and Minority Rights*, 179–90.

²¹ See Avrom Lesin: “To hobnob with the great men of the American Jewish Committee is easier, more pleasant . . . than to devote oneself to such banal subjects as simple Jewish workers.” Fun an altn bundist, “Di natsyonale arbeter komitet,” *Di tsukunft* (July 1916): 597.

National Workmen's Committee to be converted from a temporary body established in response to the crisis in Europe into "a permanent, organic union of all those Jewish organizations that stand for the class struggle in all its forms."²²

This proposal was generally seen as nothing less than a bid to transform the Jewish labor movement in America from a loose and informal conglomeration of independent organizations into a formal, albeit federal, union. It was an attempt to apply a model close to that represented by the Bund in tsarist Russia to American conditions. But although no longer newcomers, the graduates of the Bund had failed to take into account the fact that they were challenging a structure that had become deeply entrenched before they had even begun arriving in the United States. The founding fathers of the 1880s and 1890s were not about to divided their institutional power with the post-1905 generation, for all its revolutionary credentials. To prove the point, the most prominent trade unionist present, Max Pine – the head of the United Hebrew Trades – led a dramatic walkout from the Convention, thus rendering the idea of organizational unity meaningless.²³

The subsequent polemics on the pages of the Yiddish press revealed the profound gap that had now opened up between the Bundists and the veterans in the Federation, that is, the unions, the Arbeter Ring, and *Forverts*. There are "two trends," wrote Shakhne Epstein, "one the obsolete trend that is afraid of every new wind, of every new reform because they could, heaven forbid, tear the rudder of power from its hands; and the other, the trend that seeks ever new ways. . . . Those who do not reckon with the 'spirit' of the times must leave the stage; that is the law of life."²⁴ For his part, Avrom Lesin responded no less angrily in defense of the veterans "who with twenty-five years of work have formed the movement and its very great newspapers for these same 'youngsters' just off the boat and have given them every opportunity to feel so much at ease in America."²⁵

This angry division within the mainstream Jewish labor movement could not have come at a worse moment for the Federation. Within less than a year, it found itself faced by a series of challenges of immense and

²² "Di natsyonale arbeter konvenshon," editorial, *Di naye velt* 6, no. 118 (February 9, 1917): 2.

²³ Frankel, "The Jewish Socialists," 291–94.

²⁴ Shakhne Epstein, "Di natsyonale arbeter konvenshon," *Di naye velt* 7, no. 119 (February 16, 1917), 4–5.

²⁵ Avrom Lesin, "An entfere tsu gen. Olgin," *Di tsukunft* (March 1917): 138–39.

unprecedented complexity: the February Revolution in Russia; the American entry into World War I; and then – all at once in the first week of November – both the Bolshevik Revolution and the Balfour Declaration. Alienated from the powerful Jewish labor establishment, the Federation found itself further weakened by this series of events. Many of its leaders returned to Russia to join the Revolution. The Socialist Party (and with it, the Federation) lost much of its support because of its antiwar stand.²⁶ Using the February Revolution as an excuse, the Bundists decided to initiate a last-minute boycott of the elections to the American Jewish Congress in July. Confused by the October Revolution, the Federation was first opposed to Bolshevism, but soon showed signs of second thoughts. And, finally, much to its consternation, it found that in the wake of the Balfour Declaration, it had lost the power to hold the labor movement as a whole to an anti-Zionist line. Such prominent old-time unionists as Max Pine and Joseph Schlossberg, and even the convention of the ILGWU, began to express open sympathy for the idea of a Jewish national home in Palestine.²⁷

The long-term consequence of this constant erosion of the Federation was an open schism in 1921. The majority, including nearly all the most prominent Bundists (Zivion, Olgin, Salutsky, Liliput, for example) voted to leave the Socialist Party, and they soon allied themselves with the Communists within the newly formed Workers Party. The minority, which remained loyal to the principles of democratic socialism and stayed in the Socialist Party, now formed the Jewish Socialist Farband.²⁸ There was much that was paradoxical in all this. The Farband claimed to be heir to the Bundist tradition and maintained fraternal (although often tense) relations with the Bund in Poland. Its general secretary, Nokhem Chanin, was a veteran of the Russian Bund; and when the famous Bundist, A. Litvak, settled in America in 1925, he naturally joined the leadership of the Farband. It organized the lecture and fundraising tours for Polish

²⁶ On the antiwar movement generally, see H. C. Peterson and G. C. Fite, *Opponents of War 1917–18* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1957); on the war issue and the Jewish socialists, see Zosa Szajkowski, *Jews, War and Communism*, vol. 1 (New York: Ktav, 1972).

²⁷ See, for example: Tali Tadmor-Shimony, “Sheelat hazehut haleumit shel hasotzyalizm hayehudi haamerikani 1917–1924” (Ph.D. diss., The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1995), 54–60, 85–90.

²⁸ Epstein, *Jewish Labor in the U.S.A.*, 2:108–12. For background, see Theodore Draper, *The Roots of American Communism* (New York: Viking, 1957), 303–95.

Bundist leaders such as Henryk Erlich and Noakh Portnoi who spent many months at a time in the United States.²⁹

On the other hand, it is not surprising that many observers, especially in the early 1920s, believed that the Jewish section of the Workers Party more truly represented the Bundist spirit. It too was led by Bundists such as Olgin and Bittelman, and until 1925 even continued to carry its original title, the Jewish Socialist Federation. Founding its own paper, *Frayheyt*, to raise the banner of revolt against *Forverts*, it could claim to be speaking for the genuine traditions of militant socialism against the old guard which had sold out to capitalist America.³⁰ Did not *Forverts* indulge in yellow journalism (with its "Bintl Brif" and beauty competitions, for example)? And did not *Frayheyt* defend the Yiddish school movement, while *Forverts*, under Abe Cahan's leadership, was well known for its support of "Anglicization"?³¹ And was not the Farband tied hand and foot to *Forverts*, even dependent on the paper for its financial survival?³²

All this, of course, ran parallel to the similar but not identical situation in Eastern Europe, where the Jewish Section of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union, manned by ex-Bundists and by veterans of other Jewish socialist parties, was widely credited with implementing programs of Jewish nation-building in the spirit of the Bund, and of Jewish colonization in the spirit of the territorialists. The Bund itself, as already noted, together with virtually all other non-Communist parties, had been outlawed by the Soviet regime in 1921.³³

With the passage of time, many of the Bundists and other non-Communists who had joined the Workers Party resigned or were expelled, in some cases returning sheepishly to write for *Forverts*.³⁴ The highly centralized and manipulative traditions of Leninism as well as the subservience to Moscow – the Workers Party joined the Comintern in

²⁹ Hertz, *Di yidishe sotsyalistishe*, 277, 297. In 1927, Erlich held meetings in some fifty cities.

³⁰ David Prudzon, "Hakomunizm vetnu'at hapo'alim hayehudit bearzot habrit" (Ph.D. diss., Tel-Aviv University, 1985), 50–96; Ruth Wisse, *A Little Love in Big Manhattan* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), 113–15; 162–64.

³¹ Wisse, *A Little Love*, 67–68; Sandra Parker, "An Educational Assessment of the Yiddish Secular School Movements in the United States," in *Never Say Die! A Thousand Years of Yiddish in Jewish Life and Letters*, ed. Joshua Fishman (The Hague, 1981), 496–503.

³² On subsidies paid by *Forverts* to the Farband, see Hertz, *Di yidishe sotsyalistishe*, 211, 273.

³³ For the splits within, and final dissolution of, the Jewish socialist parties, see Gitelman, *Jewish Nationality*, 151–230.

³⁴ Prominent among the returnees were Hillel Rogoff and Zivion (Ben-Tsiyen Hofman).

1925 – proved particularly hard to accept in the freewheeling atmosphere of American public life.

It was against this background that the Farband, with its journal *Der veker*, emerged as the most militantly anti-Communist voice in the Jewish labor movement. According to the political logic of the times, the Farband might have been expected to proportionately reduce its hostility to Zionism both because the Zionist cause had gained broad popular sympathy and because the Communists were overtly anti-Zionist. Those leaders of the Jewish labor movement, including Bundist veterans such as David Dubinsky, who had to fight for their lives in the mid-1920s to prevent a full-scale Communist takeover of the unions and the Arbeter Ring, clearly tended to move in this direction, in large part lending their support to the fundraising (*geverkschaftn*) campaigns on behalf of the Histadrut in Palestine.³⁵ But the Farband was inhibited from following this path by its loyalty to long-standing and deeply entrenched Bundist doctrines which defined Zionism as an inherently dangerous diversion, weakening the will of the Jewish people to defend its vital interests in the real, not fantasy, world.

The strange and complex ways in which the Zionist issue was handled within the Jewish labor movement can be illustrated by a brief examination of two of the most dramatic chapters in the history of what was always a tangled and frequently a surprising set of relationships – the Arab uprising in Palestine of 1929 and the American Jewish Conference of 1943.

The news of sporadic Arab attacks on Jews in Palestine began to be reported in America in mid-August, 1929, and at first there was little to distinguish the headlines in *Forverts* from those in *Frayheytt*. A front-page headline in the August 19 *Frayheytt*, for example, reads: “Arabs Perpetrate New Pogroms Against the Jews in Various Sections of Jerusalem.” An editorial of a few days later declared that “England, which believes strongly in religious toleration, allows Jews praying at the Western Wall to be beaten up; allows Torah scrolls and *talesim* to be torn to shreds just as was done by the Petliuras and Balakhoviches during the Civil War in Russia.” The primary blame was thus assigned to the British who were trying to appease the Arab “effendis (*pritzim*), mullahs and bourgeois intelligentsia.”³⁶ The Zionists had only secondary responsibility:

³⁵ Tali Tadmor-Shimony, “Sheelat hazehut haleumit,” 177–93.

³⁶ “England shtitst di araber in Palestine,” *Frayheytt*, August 24, 1929.

the excessive uproar they had created at the recent (Sixteenth) Zionist Congress about the newly established Jewish Agency had stirred up Arab unrest. However, an abrupt change in Zionist thinking evidenced itself starting on August 27, when these two typical headlines appeared: "An Arab Mass-Revolt Against England Spreads Over All Palestine"; and, again: "The English Army and Jewish Legionnaires Perpetrate Blood-Soaked Massacres Against Arabs."³⁷

In contrast, *Forverts* gave ever more space to the pogrom theme, as on its front page of August 28: "Arabs Set Fire to Still More Jewish Colonies; Jews the Victims of Pogroms Over All of Palestine; The Pogrom in Hebron One of the Worst Massacres in Jewish History." *Forverts* gave prominent coverage to the Zionist protest march held on August 26 and attended, according to the paper, by some 20,000 people.³⁸ *Frayheytt*, though, described the event as a "demonstration groveling [*mayofes*] before Yankee imperialism."³⁹ For its part, the Jewish Section of the Communist Party organized its own mass meeting that, as *Frayheytt* put it, served to "open the eyes of the Jewish workers."⁴⁰ Among the speakers was Moishe Olgin who was quoted as saying that "the Bund demonstrated years ago that Zionism means a fight against the Arab masses; they are to be deprived of their land, and the Arab working masses enslaved." As for the accusation that his party was encouraging pogroms, it was "we who fought them when the Jewish bourgeoisie was cowering in cellars afraid to show their noses above ground. . . . We Communists fought against pogroms and we shall continue to do so."⁴¹

Forverts argued that there were no objective causes – meaning, as it put it, a "clash of economic interests" – to explain the Arab violence. The simple cause was incitement coming from various quarters: economic competitors (both Arab and British); "fanatical Christians"; anti-Semites; and the "Communists, in the interests of world revolution." As for the response in America, declared *Forverts*, "real anti-Semites have never permitted themselves at the time of a pogrom, when the blood of the

³⁷ Headlines of August 27 and 30. (The reference is to veterans of the "Jewish Legion," the three Jewish battalions that fought within the British army in 1918.)

³⁸ "Tsvantsig toyzent yiden in nyu york hoben zikh nekhten bateylikt in grosen demonstratsye," *Forverts*, August 27, 1929, p. 1.

³⁹ "Tsionistn un klekoydesh firn durkh a mayofes demonstratsye," *Frayheytt*, August 24, 1929.

⁴⁰ "Komunistishe miting in irving plaza efnt oyf di nygn fun di yidishe arbeter," *Frayheytt*, August 30, 1929.

⁴¹ Ibid.

Jewish victims has still not dried, to come out with such abuse of the Jews under attack as does the Communist press here.”⁴²

Caught between these two positions, the Jewish Socialist Farband naturally inclined more toward the position of *Forverts*, and *Der veker* called on its readers to contribute money to the campaign launched in aid of the Jewish victims in Palestine. When it is an issue, declared the journal, of “the Jews having to defend themselves, of standing up for their lives, their property and their honor – there is only one commandment: take up arms! The greatest opponent of Zionism, if he had found himself in Hebron or Jerusalem, would have fought back against the Arabs.”⁴³

Der veker, too, took the golden opportunity to settle accounts with the Communists, noting that their sudden change of line reflected their customary “barracks-discipline”⁴⁴ and had resulted in the defection from *Frayheyt* of such an important figure as Avrom Raisin, the Yiddish poet. “They are creating a Jewish cemetery in Birobidzhan,” declared one correspondent, “and support *pogromshchiki* in Palestine.”⁴⁵

But *Der veker* was not prepared to explain the violence merely in terms of incitement. It marked itself off from what it termed “the black chauvinist hysteria” against the Arabs that, it declared, had engulfed all the Yiddish press (excluding, of course, *Frayheyt* with its “young hooligan” editors but including, if only by implication, *Forverts*). In the long run, there was no choice but to seek firm ground on which to base “peace . . . between two peoples who live on the same land.”⁴⁶ In terms far more critical of Zionism, Rafael Abramovich pointed out that the Jewish population, even with immigration, was hardly keeping up with the increase in Arab numbers. With 150,000 Jews facing 650,000 Arabs “there is no hope that Jews will ever be a majority in the country.” The most that the Zionists could hope to achieve in Palestine was a colony “smaller than a Warsaw suburb.”⁴⁷

In sum, it can be stated that *Frayheyt* suffered great damage in the Jewish world as the result of the line imposed on it by Stalin’s leadership

⁴² “Di komunistishe tsaytungen in amerike hetsen itst gegen di yiden fun palestine,” *Forverts*, August 28, 1929, p. 1.

⁴³ “Di troyerike pasirungen in Palestine,” *Der veker*, September 7, 1929, p. 1.

⁴⁴ A. Muk. [Litvak], “Fun der zayt,” *Der veker*, September 21, 1929, p. 7.

⁴⁵ A. Shiplacoff, “Komunistishe printsipen un yidishe blut,” *Der veker*, September 21, 1929, p. 14.

⁴⁶ “Di troyerike pasirungen in palestine,” *Der veker*, September 7, 1929, p. 1.

⁴⁷ R. Abramovich. “Di palestiner gesheenuishen un der tsienizm,” *Der veker*, October 5, 1929, p. 5.

in Moscow. It lost support not just from Raisin but from other prominent writers such as H. Leivik and Menachem Boreisha, as well, of course, as from within the left-wing Jewish public at large.⁴⁸ But even the middle-of-the-road position adopted by the Farband could not have been popular. As Zivion put it at the time: "In America, Zionism has reached a high point . . . and has won the sympathy of nearly all the Jews with the exception of a few opponents and non-believers among whom I have the honor to count myself."⁴⁹

To move forward to 1943 is, of course, to enter a totally different era in Jewish history, one in which the Jewish people in Europe were murdered systematically. The many historiographical issues involved continue to attract enormous attention, to raise issues of great human and moral import, and stir profound discomfort and anguish among Jews and others. All that is to be attempted here, though, is to sketch in the briefest possible terms the position occupied by the Jewish Socialist Farband in relation to the American Jewish Conference which took place in New York between August 29 and September 2, 1943.

At the level of what can loosely be termed party politics, developments in relation to the American Jewish Conference in 1943 closely paralleled those that had taken place during the First World War. To some extent, indeed, the repetition resulted from a conscious belief that the lessons learned then did not have to be relearned now. As in 1914-1918, so in 1943, the call for the American Jews to elect a representative body to defend the interests of European Jewry had a very broad popular appeal. But the idea was regarded with suspicion by those who saw it as an attempt by the Zionists to exploit a crisis in order to gain unassailable leadership over the American Jewish community. The result, in the Second World War as in the First, was that the Jewish labor movement, now represented not by the long-defunct National Workmen's Committee but by the Jewish Labor Committee, found itself in the same camp as the American Jewish Committee, although this time there was no formal alliance. In 1943 as in 1917, these two otherwise very disparate organizations decided to boycott the elections. In 1917, some 300,000 people went to the polls; in 1943 the number taking part in the indirect elections was put at 1,171,000.⁵⁰ However, on both occasions, the Jewish Labor Committee and the American Jewish Committee decided in the end to

⁴⁸ Epstein, *The Jew and Communism*, 224-33; Wisse, *A Little Love*, 190-98.

⁴⁹ Zivion, "Yidishe interesn." *Forverts*, August 29, 1929, p. 3.

⁵⁰ Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics*, 536; "Zionists Seek Aid of American Jews," *New York Times*, August 30, 1943, p. 6.

participate in the actual assembly, using the seats set aside for organizational representation. (The labor movement was allotted twenty such places in 1918; sixteen in 1943.)⁵¹

The Jewish Socialist Farband was far weaker in 1943 than the Federation had been during the First World War. Rooted almost exclusively in the immigrant community, it had a rapidly aging, and hence declining, membership; and it had split apart for a second time in 1935 (again, as in 1921, over the issue of cooperation with the Communists).⁵² But it enjoyed an influence far greater than its numbers suggested. It was, after all, a constituent member of the Jewish Labor Committee, established in 1934 under the chairmanship of Baruch Vladeck to seek appropriate ways to respond to the Nazi threat against the Jews. Like the National Workmen's Committee in its time, the Jewish Labor Committee was an umbrella organization representing the major constituents of the labor movement (and again excluding the Poalei Tsiyon).⁵³

Within this framework the Farband, which still had its own journal, *Der veker*, was well situated to advance its dual ideological position: militant anti-Communism on one hand, and opposition to Zionist hegemony on the other. The decision of the Jewish Labor Committee to take part in the American Jewish Conference was made on two conditions: first, that Jewish Communist organizations be excluded and, second, that the delegation would vote as a single bloc – in other words, that all its members would abstain from voting – on controversial Zionist resolutions.

The American Jewish Congress had hammered out a compromise in 1916 that eventually permitted a united delegation, headed by Louis Marshall of the American Jewish Committee and including representatives of the labor movement, to play a major role at the Paris peace conference in defense of minority rights in Eastern Europe and of a “national home” in Palestine.⁵⁴ No such degree of consensus was achieved in 1943. The Revisionist Zionists and Agudat Yisrael complained of underrepresentation and did not attend. The Communist organizations, anxious to participate, were excluded. Zionists, under the impassioned lead of Abba Hillel Silver, pushed through a resolution calling for the establishment of a Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine, thereby endorsing the controversial Biltmore program of 1942. The Jewish Labor Committee and the

⁵¹ Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics*, 540–43; “Yidisher arbeter komitet kleybt oys 16 delegaten tsu algemeyner yidishe konferents,” *Forverts*, August 28, 1943, p. 6.

⁵² Hertz, *Di yidishe sotsyalistishe*, 315–22.

⁵³ On the Jewish Labor Committee, see Epstein, *Jewish Labor in U.S.A.*, 2:402–9.

⁵⁴ Janowsky, *Jews and Minority Rights*, 264–390.

American Jewish Committee had called for a more cautious resolution condemning the British White Paper of 1939 and demanding the removal of restrictions on Jewish immigration to, and land purchase in, Palestine. Although they did not stage a walkout in protest at the time, the two Committees both subsequently broke away from the framework of the American Jewish Conference.⁵⁵

The knowledge that the Jews of Europe were being systematically annihilated, that perhaps as many as four million had already been killed⁵⁶ – in no way brought with it a general decision to achieve compromise or lower the tone of dispute. The contrary was possibly the case. The Farband found itself faced on the right by a huge wave of support for Zionism, and on the left by a Jewish Communist movement that had totally reversed the positions it had held in 1929. In its effort to mobilize American support for the war effort and the Second Front, so taking pressure off the Soviet Union, the Communist movement now provided maximal support not only to the American Jewish Conference, but to the Zionist cause in general. A typical Communist appeal called on the American Jewish Conference to provide "maximal aid to the Yishuv in Palestine, which is involved in the fight, and to guarantee the national rights of the Jews in Palestine."⁵⁷ Or, as Pesach Novick put it: "The Palestinian Jews have made a great contribution to the war effort... and if [they] end up gaining by it, that is not to be faulted – quite the contrary."⁵⁸ Attacking the Jewish Labor Committee, *Forverts*, and the Bundists – particularly the committee established in New York to represent the Bundist underground in Nazi-occupied Poland⁵⁹ – as insufficiently enthusiastic

⁵⁵ Isaac Neustadt-Noy, "The Unending Task: Efforts to Unite American Jewry from the American Jewish Congress to the American Jewish Conference" (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 1976), 321, 336.

⁵⁶ Stephen Wise warned in August 1943 that as many as four million Jews might already have been killed by the Nazis – a figure treated with skepticism by correspondents in *Forverts*: L. Fogelman, "Ken men zikh farlozn oyf ale barikhten vegn di shkhites of yiden in eyrope," *Forverts*, August 25, 1943, p. 1; Zivion, "Yidishe interesen," *Forverts*, August 28, 1943, p. 6.

⁵⁷ "Folks komitet shikt briv tsu di delegatn fun yidisher konferents vegn eynikayt," *Morgn-Frayheyt*, August 12, 1943.

⁵⁸ P. Novick, "Di konferents vegn palestine un di yidishe asembli," *Morgn-Frayheyt*, August 13, 1943.

⁵⁹ The committee in exile ("Representation") of the Polish Bund issued a statement on August 9, 1943, calling for a boycott of the American Jewish Conference. Novick described the Representation as made up of "a number of sworn enemies of the Soviet Union" (ibid.). The leading figure on it at the time was Emmanuel Sherer. See Daniel Blatman, *Lema'an kherutenu vekherutem: habund befolin 1939–1949* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1996), 201–16.

about Jewish unity and Zionism, *Frayheyt* (now the *Morgen-frayheyt*) did not hesitate to use such terms as “traitors within the Jewish people, the Jewish Lavals and Quislings.”⁶⁰

In response to this extreme pressure on two different fronts, the Farband and its Bundist peripheries did not adopt a single tone. Some spoke more in sorrow than in anger, others with extreme bitterness. Writing for *Der veker* on the eve of the American Jewish Conference, Nokhem Chanin complained in carefully measured tones that far too little had been done to further a strategy for the rescue of Jews still alive under Nazi control. “That we are not helping is not only their tragedy; it is also our shame – I am referring to criminal indifference.” Much of the blame lay with the Zionists in whose hands “all demands made on Washington are narrowed to one demand, a Jewish homeland in Erets Yisroel.” But even the Joint Distribution Committee, for all its genuine efforts, had “unfortunately demonstrated too much caution, too much fear.”⁶¹

The Conference did devote much of its time to the issue of rescue, and carried the appropriate resolutions.⁶² But Chanin insisted that priorities had still been distorted. It was a “source of great sorrow . . . that a Jewish conference called together in such a terrible period of Jewish history should have occupied itself for three days with the Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine . . . and one . . . with adopting dull resolutions about the present Jewish tragedy.” But the failure, he insisted, was implicit in the Zionist viewpoint that anti-Semitism stemmed inevitably from the minority status of the Jews in the diaspora: “This is the way that it has been [they say], that it is, and that it will be. With such a philosophy one has to forego even the great and important need to cry out against the torturers.” At least, he added, the conference had had the good sense to keep out the Communists even though they were now ready “to make the Hatikvah their second party anthem.”⁶³ Others were far less restrained. In another postconference article in *Der veker*, David Einhorn could write: “That the true, hard, Zionists . . . are not particularly unhappy about the slaughter and bloody destruction of the Jewish communities in Europe

⁶⁰ Mit vos zol zikh farnemen di amerikaner yidishe konferents?” *Morgn-Frayheyt*, August 17, 1943.

⁶¹ N. Chanin, “Tsufl hoykh-politk un tsufl glaykhgiltikeyt,” *Der veker*, September 1, 1943, p. 7.

⁶² *The American Jewish Conference: Its Organization and Proceedings of the First Session (August 29 to September 2, 1943)* (New York: 1944), 77–88; 115–29.

⁶³ N. Chanin, “Di algemeyne yidishe konferents,” *Der veker*, September 15, 1943, pp. 4–5.

is something we have long known. . . . Don't dance around the *khurbn* [destruction] of the Jewish *golus* [exile, diaspora]." ⁶⁴

The graduates of the Bund in America were frequently able as individuals to achieve important positions of influence and leadership within the preexisting labor movement. On the other hand, their attempts to recreate some approximate reincarnation of the Bund never achieved more than marginal success. However, a nucleus of loyalists did succeed over a number of decades in upholding with an honorable consistency what can be considered the core of Bundist ideology: opposition to the Bolshevik theory and practice of dictatorship, on the one hand, and to the Zionist critique of the diaspora, on the other.

⁶⁴ Dovid Einhorn, "Di flamen vos baloykht di tsionistishe geule," *Der veker*, September 15, 1943, 10.

PART FIVE

HISTORY AND THE HISTORIANS

S. M. Dubnov

Historian and Ideologist

In the early years of this century, Simon Dubnov, then a man in his forties, was already a well-known figure in the Russian-Jewish intelligentsia. But among what was then a rapidly growing social stratum of writers, journalists, artists, men of the professions, politicians, ideologists, and revolutionaries he was not unusually prominent, certainly not famous.

Today, though, some fifty years after he was killed by the Nazis in Riga, he continues to command attention within the Jewish intellectual world,¹ while the vast majority of his contemporaries are all but forgotten. Time has demonstrated that Dubnov enjoys two abiding claims to fame.

First, in his *Letters on Old and New Jewry*, which he began to publish in article form in 1897, he put forward in well-elaborated terms the theory of what is variously known as Diaspora nationalism or Jewish national autonomism. Essentially, this theory states that even with the destruction of their state in 70 C.E. and their dispersal across the world, the Jews have remained a nation (albeit “nonterritorial” in character); that until the French Revolution and emancipation, the Jews had always been granted a large measure of internal self-government in the host states; that in the modern era, they should therefore lay claim in the

¹ Although there is as yet no full-scale scholarly biography of Dubnov, there are numerous biographical and analytical articles about him. In addition to the works cited in the notes below, see, e.g.: Israel Friedlaender, *Dubnov's Theory of Jewish Nationalism* (New York, 1905); Josef Fraenkel, *Dubnov, Herzl and Ahad Ha-Am* (London, 1963); and Lionel Kochan, “The Apotheosis of History: Dubnov,” in *The Jew and His History* (London, 1979), pp. 88–98. An entire edition of *He-avar* was assigned to essays on Dubnov: *He-avar: hoveret Shimon Dubnov: le-mleat mea shana le-holadeto*, vol. 8 (1961). (Alfred A. Greenbaum's forthcoming book in Hebrew on Russian-Jewish historiography will include a chapter on Dubnov, which the author has kindly permitted me to consult.)

Previously published in Sophie Dubnov-Erlich, *The Life and Work of S.M. Dubnov* (Bloomington, 1991), pp. 1–33. This essay is dedicated to the memory of Alexander Erlich.

various countries of the Diaspora not only to civil but also to national (that is, national minority) rights; and that national autonomy would enable them not only to run their own internal (above all, educational) affairs but also to defend their political interests more effectively both at home and abroad. Although Dubnov may not have been the first person to advocate Jewish autonomism – Chaim Zhitlowsky, for example, like Dubnov himself, had been preparing the ground for the theory since the early 1890s – his powerful presentation of it as an all-embracing ideology ensured that it came to be associated to a large extent with his own name.

However, it is not Dubnov the ideologist but Dubnov the historian who is surely the better known today. His history of the Jews throughout the ages, first published in the 1920s in a ten-volume German edition (translated from the Russian manuscript), rapidly became, and still remains, a standard work.² Together with the histories by Heinrich Graetz and Salo Wittmayer Baron³ it belongs to an extremely rare, and by now probably extinct, genre: the attempt to encompass single-handedly the whole of Jewish history within one massive and conceptually unified work of high scholarship.

The publication of Dubnov's *Weltgeschichte* marked the culmination of a lifetime devoted to research on and the writing of Jewish history. His characteristic interests, methodology, and historiographical theories had already made a profound impact on his students in Russia before the First World War, and they in turn had begun to disseminate his ideas in Germany. But it was only with the appearance of the ten-volume history that readers in the West, or at least in Central Europe, could begin to familiarize themselves with the full scope of his work.

Almost by chance, though, a number of Dubnov's works had by then been available for some time in English translation. The credit for this somewhat surprising situation was almost entirely due to the enthusiasm of Israel Friedlaender, a Polish Jew who had studied in Berlin and who became a member of the faculty of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York in 1904.⁴ His German version of Dubnov's historiographical

² *Weltgeschichte des jüdischen Volkes: Von seinen Uranfängen bis zur Gegenwart*, translated by Aaron Steinberg, 10 vols. (Berlin, 1925–29).

³ Heinrich Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden von den ältesten Zeiten bis auf die Gegenwart*, 2d ed., 11 vols. (Leipzig, 1863–1902); published in English as *History of the Jews*, 6 vols. (Philadelphia, 1956). Salo W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, 18 vols. (New York, 1952–83).

⁴ For a recent biography, see Baila R. Shargel, *Practical Dreamer: Israel Friedlaender and the Shaping of American Judaism* (New York, 1985).

essay of 1893⁵ formed the basis for the English edition, *Jewish History: An Essay in the Philosophy of History*, translated by Henrietta Szold and published in Philadelphia in 1903. Friedlaender himself translated and initiated the publication of Dubnov's three-volume *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland*, which came out, again in the United States, during the period 1916–20.

Friedlaender was killed in the Ukraine while on a relief mission in 1920, and the translation of Dubnov's writings was not taken up again until after the Second World War. In 1958, The Jewish Publication Society of America brought out a selection of his essays under the title *Nationalism and History*. It included, *inter alia*, the bulk of *Letters on Old and New Jewry* (translated from the authorized but very truncated Hebrew edition of 1937⁶) as well as a highly perceptive and informed introduction by the editor, Koppel S. Pinson.⁷ Some ten years later, the English edition of Dubnov's world history began to appear, in five bulky volumes.⁸

What has hitherto not been available in English (with the exception of an unpublished dissertation)⁹ is a biography of Dubnov. This missing link has now been fitted into place with the publication of the present volume, Sophie Dubnov-Erlich's biography of her father, which was first published in Russian in 1950. To a considerable extent, her work is based on the autobiography that Dubnov began publishing in Riga in 1934.¹⁰ It shares much of the characteristic reticence of those memoirs, and one may well ask whether preference should not have been given to translating the autobiography first. (Certainly, it is to be hoped that Dubnov's *Kniga Zhizni* [The Book of My Life] will appear in English at some time. The second volume, in particular, is an extraordinary document, consisting largely of diaries kept in Petrograd during the 1917 revolution and the Civil War.)

⁵ "Chto takoe evreiskaia istoriia? Opyt kratkoi filosofskoi kharakteristiki," *Voskhod*, October–November 1893, pp. 111–42; December 1893, pp. 78–112.

⁶ *Mikhtavim al ha-yahadut ha-yeshana ve-he-hadasha* (Tel-Aviv, 1937). The Yiddish edition, by contrast, is unabridged, being a translation from the Russian book of 1907: *Briv vegn altn un nayem yidntum*, introduction by Chaim Szlama Kazdan (Mexico City, 1959). For a new, scholarly, and full edition, see *Lettres sur le Judaïsme ancien et nouveau*, edited and with an introduction by Renée Poznanski (Paris, 1989).

⁷ *Nationalism and History: Essays on Old and New Judaism*, edited and with an introduction by Koppel S. Pinson (Philadelphia, 1958).

⁸ *History of the Jews*, translated by Moshe Spiegel, 5 vols. (New York, 1967–73).

⁹ Robert M. Seltzer, "Simon Dubnov: A Critical Biography of His Early Years," Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1970.

¹⁰ *Kniga zhizni: Vospominaniia i razmysleniia*, 3 vols. (Riga, 1934–35; New York, 1957).

But the autobiography is a sprawling work of some nine hundred pages and does not go beyond 1933. Moreover, Sophie Dubnov-Erich had to reconstruct not only the last nine, but actually the last twenty, years of her father's life from her own memories and from scattered written sources, published and unpublished. In 1950, she was still under the impression that all the copies of the third volume of the autobiography had been destroyed by the Germans shortly after its publication in Riga. It was only some years later that a single surviving book (mailed out by Dubnov as a personal gift on the eve of the Nazi invasion) was found in Australia, in the private library of Isaac Steinberg.¹¹

The present work not only covers Dubnov's entire life story in compact form but also brings out, more strongly perhaps than does the autobiography, various personal aspects of that story. Most notably, it portrays the heavy burden borne by Ida Dubnov, as the wife of a penurious and highly dedicated scholar; and it conveys the depth of Dubnov's love of nature – for the shores of the Black and the Baltic seas, for the White Russian and Finnish forests. For the first time English readers can glimpse the man behind the hitherto disembodied ideologist and scholar.

The central theme which provides Dubnov's memoirs with a strong sense of purpose and unity, and which finds clear reflection in his daughter's biography, is the idea of a life divided into three highly distinct phases.¹² In his childhood and until his early teens, Simon Dubnov grew up cocooned, as it were, within the safe confines of Mstislavl, an exceptionally beautiful but otherwise not unusual Belorussian *shetl*. As the descendant of a long line of distinguished rabbis and the grandson of the local rabbi, an outstanding talmudist, the young Dubnov was automatically put through all the stages of the traditional educational system, rapidly advancing from biblical to talmudic studies, and from the *kheyder* to his grandfather's lessons in textual explication (*shiurim*). In a different period, Dubnov would in all probability have ended up as a rabbi himself.

But in 1874, he started attending a state school, where he acquired for the first time a real knowledge of the Russian language (to use in addition to his mother tongue, Yiddish, and his excellent Hebrew). And for the next ten years he advanced very far along the path of alienation from the traditional micro-world in which he had grown up. An uncritical

¹¹ Sophie Dubnov-Erich, "Predislovie," *ibid.*, III, p.vii.

¹² See S. Dubnov-Erich, *The Life and Work of S. M. Dubnov* (Bloomington, 1991), e.g., pp. 84, 224.

faith in the divine inspiration of the Jewish law, whether written or oral, gave way first to deism and then to materialism and positivism, as he avidly read his way through Chernyshevsky and Pisarev, and Russian versions of Buckle, Spencer, Mill, and Comte. He rebelled against the “blind patriotism,”¹³ the unquestioning loyalty to the Jewish people, of his childhood and found himself increasingly subjected to an inner “storm of cosmopolitanism.”¹⁴ By the mid-1880s he had become an awesome “legend” among the youth of his native district – the rabbi’s grandson who, when visiting Mstislavl, stayed at home working on Yom Kippur, when all the other Jews were at the synagogue.¹⁵

Eventually, though, a clear reaction set in, and Dubnov found his belief in positivism giving way to skepticism and doubt. In the late Tolstoy (particularly in *A Confession*) and in Ernst Renan, he heard echoes of his own need to make good a growing “loss of faith.”¹⁶ From the late 1880s he began his way back, seeking a bridge between the old and the new, the particular and the universal.¹⁷ By 1897, he had reached the point where he could present publicly his own complete world view – a secular Jewish nationalism. This ideology envisaged the gradual transformation of traditional culture within a pluralistic modern nation and of traditional self-government within the structures of national autonomy and the twentieth-century democratic state.

There is no doubt – and it would be absurd to argue otherwise – that Dubnov’s triadic concept reflected certain key changes in his ideological development. That is demonstrated by the political positions he took in 1881 and 1905, during the two great crises which then swept over the Jewish people in the Russian empire.

The massive wave of pogroms which originated in Elizavetgrad in April 1881 found Dubnov, then a mere twenty-one years old, living impecuniously in St. Petersburg, without a long-term residence permit and therefore in constant danger of police harassment. But despite his extreme youth, he was already a budding journalist, having published a few articles, and so was able to formulate his response to the crisis in the Russian-language Jewish journals published in the capital: *Razsvet*, *Russkii Evrei*, and *Voskhod*.

¹³ *Kniga zhizni*, I, 90. Dubnov apparently quoted this phrase from a letter he had written in 1878.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, I, 34.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, I, 175–76; II, 234–35.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, I, 221.

¹⁷ For an excellent analysis of this period of reassessment, see Robert M. Seltzer, “Coming Home: The Personal Basis of Simon Dubnow’s Ideology,” *AJS Review* 1 (1976):283–301.

The task Dubnov took upon himself during the years 1881–84 was to champion the embattled positions of the Russian-Jewish Enlightenment, or *Haskalah*, movement as it had developed over the previous half-century. In the face of the challenge posed by the pogroms, the rise in popular anti-Semitism, and open governmental hostility, it was the duty of the Jewish intelligentsia, as he saw it, to demonstrate loyalty to and even to accentuate its basic beliefs, while avoiding at all costs the stampede to reassess basic values.

What this meant in practice was, above all, a consistent and sharply argued hostility to the claim of the new Palestinophile movement that its program could potentially solve the Jewish question in Russia or even worldwide. Dubnov pointed out that the existing Jewish community in Palestine was so ultra-Orthodox that it would do everything in its power to ensure that new immigrants would abandon agricultural work (exchanging “the plough for the prayerbook”¹⁸); that the country was *de jure* in the hands of Turkey, which was bound to be hostile, and *de facto* in those of the Great Powers, which were afraid to tamper with the *status quo*.

He maintained that it was the height of irresponsibility to encourage extraordinary excitement and manifestly exaggerated expectations, as Peretz Smolenskin and other ideologists of the new movement were doing.

There could be no single or simple panacea for a problem of such magnitude, Dubnov argued. In order to meet the crisis one had to pursue a number of different and parallel policies simultaneously. Thus he was among the very first to advocate a planned campaign to organize the large-scale emigration of Jews from Russia and their resettlement in new agricultural colonies in North America. In his article of August 1881 in *Razsvet*, he envisaged the campaign as a joint effort of the Jews in Russia, Western Europe, and America. Only the United States could provide the Jews with “firm ground not poisoned by the destructive miasmas of national enmity and religious intolerance.”¹⁹ At the same time, a significant reduction of the Jewish population in the countries of origin could defuse the anti-Semitic threat in “Russia and Germany – that is, in two-thirds of Europe.”²⁰

However, for the majority of the Jewish population, which had no choice but to stay in the tsarist empire, the long-term goal had to remain what it had been for many decades: the attainment of full civil rights, equality before the law. Obviously, nothing of the kind was to be expected

¹⁸ “Vopros dnia,” *Razsvet* 35 (28 August 1881):1386.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 1387.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

in the Judeophobic atmosphere of 1881, but in anticipation of yet another reversal in tsarist policy, the Russian Jews should meanwhile rebuild their own way of life, thus strengthening their claim to emancipation and preparing themselves to make full use of it when it finally came. Thus, redoubled efforts had to be made to develop modern education within the Russian Jewish world, and Dubnov emphasized particularly the training in technical skills planned by the organization ORT, which was founded in St. Petersburg in 1880.²¹

Still more important, though, as he argued with vehemence in the years 1882–84, was the urgent need to reform the theology and ritual of the Jewish religion as it had developed in Eastern Europe. This issue lay at the very center of his entire conception of Jewish history in this period. He shared fully the idea considered almost axiomatic by most modern Jewish thinkers in the West: Since the destruction of the Judean state in 70 C.E. the Jews had transformed themselves from a nation into a religion, or as Dubnov put it in 1881, “The history of the Jewish people is primarily the history of Judaism pure and simple.”²²

It followed logically that any basic changes in Jewish life had to begin with reform of the religion. Dubnov eagerly pursued the basic concept of Reform as developed in Germany in the 1840s; that of an essential Judaism, primarily Mosaic and Prophetic, with the Oral Law seen as a necessary evil, a shell developed to protect the kernel during the centuries of medieval persecution. The time had now come to cleanse the kernel of all its outmoded accretions. Referring to the leading ideologist of German Reform Judaism (himself a famous historian), Dubnov wrote that “the Russian Jews are still awaiting their Geigers.”²³ And, as he put it in 1883, in his well-known essay “What Kind of Self-Emancipation Do the Jews Need?”:

I know of no word in Jewish history so terrible as *rabbinitism*; for the Jews it has been a hundred times worse and more destructive than the Inquisition; the latter destroyed people physically, the former spiritually. The Inquisition was active at a specific time; rabbinitism remains at work without cease.²⁴

Between such ideological positions as these and Dubnov’s political role in the next major upheaval, the 1905 revolution, there certainly was a yawning gulf. Throughout the revolutionary period, 1905–1907, Dubnov

²¹ *Razsvet* 34 (21 August 1881):1349.

²² “Neskol’ko momentov v istorii razvitiia evreiskoi mysli,” *Russkii Evrei* 16 (15 April 1881):628.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 631.

²⁴ “Kakaia samoemantsipatsiia nuzhna evreiam?” *Voskhod*, May–June 1883, p. 240.

was an unflagging spokesman for the view that the Jewish people in Russia had to claim not only civil but also national rights. He was living in Vilna for most of that time, and so when the Union for the Attainment of Full Rights for the Jewish People in Russia held its founding conference in that city in March 1905, Dubnov was on hand to see that this demand was included in its program. Later the same year, he pioneered the idea, which was adopted by the Union but never implemented, that it was time to call together a democratically elected National Assembly to represent the Jewish people in Russia.

During the revolutionary years, Dubnov had the satisfaction of seeing the concept of national autonomy, although in many variant forms, adopted by nearly every Jewish party in the Russian empire. But his hopes that all the movements – whether Zionist, Bundist, territorialist or liberal, “bourgeois” or “proletarian” – would unite to lay the immediate foundations for that autonomy were sadly disappointed. By 1907 he found himself with no choice but to work within the narrow confines of yet another party – albeit one named the Folkspartey (People’s Party) – which advocated not only national autonomy but also organized assistance for Jewish emigration overseas, particularly to America.²⁵

Even before the revolution, Dubnov had for many years been rethinking his concept of the essence of Jewish history. The position he finally adopted turned out to be the exact reverse of his viewpoint in the early 1880s. As he put it succinctly in the introduction to his *World History*, written in St. Petersburg in 1910, “Judaism has been formed in the image of the nation, of the society, and not vice versa.”²⁶

There was, then, a strong factual basis for the triadic concept of his life, which Dubnov emphasized in his autobiography. At the same time, though, it should be noted, he had his own logic for stressing this particular theme in his life story. As he explained many times, he was convinced that his personal experience reflected nothing less than the major trend in modern Jewish history. The negation of tradition, which had led to the triumph of “assimilationism,” had, in turn, produced its own negation and the growing ascendancy of Jewish nationalism. Dubnov saw in this process a guarantee that the ideology he shared was being carried forward

²⁵ On Dubnov and the founding of the Folkspartey, see Robert M. Seltzer, “Jewish Liberalism in Late Tsarist Russia,” *Contemporary Jewry* 9/1 (1987–88):47–66; and Oscar I. Janowsky, *The Jews and Minority Rights* (1898–1919) (New York, 1933), pp. 114–18.

²⁶ *Vsemirnaia istoriia evreiskogo naroda* (Berlin, 1924; dated St. Petersburg, 1910/Berlin, 1924), I, xv.

on an upward curve, that it had the force of history on its side and would inevitably triumph throughout the Jewish world.

But beyond that, he also argued that this type of triadic process – thesis, antithesis, synthesis – represented a basic law of historic development. As he saw it, this law was rooted not in metaphysics, as Hegel would have it, or in economics, as Marx believed, but in the workings of sociopsychology.²⁷ Sooner or later, traditional societies are bound to end in rebellion; radical change in turn produces reaction, and the interaction between these two forces culminates in some new and higher stage of social organization. Ultimately, it was this dialectical logic which alone ensured human progress.

In short, the tripartite framework was meant to emphasize the typical – Dubnov's life as a paradigm reflecting the inevitable ideological metamorphosis of the Russian-Jewish intelligentsia, a "pilgrim's progress." This theme was taken up eagerly, of course, in the biographical essays of such nationalist historians of the next generations as Ben Zion Dinur and Yehuda Slutsky.²⁸

However, the Jewish world in which Dubnov lived has long since been destroyed, be it physically by the Nazis or culturally by the Soviet dictatorship. And today's vantage point, of necessity, opens up entirely different perspectives on his life. The deep and prolonged ideological conflict between the Jewish nationalists and the so-called assimilationists – between "the freedom in slavery" of East European Jews and "the slavery in freedom" of the Jews of Western Europe (to use Ahad Ha-Am's terminology) – which dictated the structure of Dubnov's autobiography, no longer commands the attention of the Jewish people.

What perhaps stands out most clearly today is how very much, beyond the typical, Dubnov remained, throughout, an exceptional and in important ways a unique figure within the Russian-Jewish intelligentsia, both as ideologist and, still more, as historian. In part, this was due to his individualistic temperament. Even though Dubnov was open to persuasion (and Ahad Ha-Am, for example, clearly exerted a major influence on his thinking during his Odessa years²⁹), he could never be stampeded into the mainstream. As a result, he often took up oddly anachronistic positions. For example, in the years 1883–84 he could do battle for the

²⁷ *Kniga Zbizni*, III, 134–38.

²⁸ Ben Zion Dinaburg [Dinur], "Shimon Dubnov (le-yovalo ha-70)," *Tsiyon [Zion]*, 1/2 (1936):95–128; Y. Slutsky, "Kritikus," *He-avar*, 8 (1961):43–59.

²⁹ Robert Seltzer, "Ahad Haam and Dubnov: Friends and Adversaries," in Jacques Kornberg, ed., *At the Crossroads: Essays on Ahad Haam* (Albany, 1983), pp. 60–73.

hopelessly outmoded idea of Reform Judaism in Russia as if he were still in the 1870s; and in 1890 it was his old-fashioned article in praise of Western Jewish “mission” theology³⁰ which provoked Ahad Ha-Am’s famous counterattack.³¹

In these cases Dubnov would eventually change his mind and fall into line with prevailing opinion in the Jewish nationalist camp. However, of more fundamental importance was the extent to which he remained doggedly loyal throughout the sixty years of his intellectually active adult life to a number of key concepts and articles of faith. Continuity rather than discontinuity was the particular hallmark of his life and thought.³²

Dubnov always made it clear – starting with his earliest articles of 1881 – that throughout its thousands of years of history the Jewish people has, as he saw it, been engaged in a harsh but necessary struggle for survival. The threats to its existence came from without (physical dangers) and from within (the loss of morale). Even in the early and mid-1880s, which Dubnov would later term his “cosmopolitan” phase, he sought not the disappearance of the Jewish people, but its modernization, its transformation into a “civilized nation” which could contribute its part to “the enlightened future of mankind.”³³

Time and again, Dubnov explained the key turning points in Jewish history (such as Yohanan Ben-Zakai’s move to Yavne) by the fact that “the *instinct of national self-preservation* was unusually developed among all members of the nation.”³⁴ Or as he put it in April 1881, “The most characteristic mark of Jewish history is the struggle of the people for its spiritual existence.”³⁵ From beginning to end the key actor in, and the subject of, Jewish history was the “people.” And Dubnov can be characterized as a life-long Jewish “populist,” so long as it is borne in mind that populism in Russia often implied an idealized view of the people not as it actually was, but only as it might become.

³⁰ Kritikus [Dubnov], “Literaturnaia letopis’: Vechnye i efemernye idealy evreistva,” *Voskhod*, December 1890, section 2, pp. 15–24.

³¹ Ahad Ha-am, “Avdut be-tokh herut,” *Kol kitvei Ahad Ha-am* (Tel-Aviv, 1947), pp. 54–59. (First published in *Ha-Meliz*, 1891.)

³² Koppel Pinson made this same point: “Dubnow, however, never became a revolutionary. . . . Capable though he was of deep emotion and sentiment, yet throughout his life sober and practical realism always triumphed over romantic enthusiasm. Dubnow always remained a moderate humanitarian reformer.” (“Simon Dubnow: Historian and Political Philosopher,” in Dubnow, *Nationalism and History*, p. 7.)

³³ “Kakaia samoemantsipatsiia nuzhna evreiam?” *Voskhod*, May–June 1883, p. 221.

³⁴ “Neskol’ko momentov v istorii razvitiia evreiskoi mysli,” *Russkii Evrei* 18 (1 May 1881):710.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 16 (15 April 1881):628.

Secondly, Dubnov's view of Jewish history as the struggle of a people for its "national self-preservation" was organically linked to his lifelong evolutionism. He always believed that the basic social unit in which men came to organize their lives was the nation, and that change resulted from the interaction, the rivalry, and the mutual influence among the peoples of the world. The law of "the survival of the fittest" applied to nations no less than to species.

Violence, of course, played a crucial role in history; but another immutable axiom of Dubnov's credo was that the evolution of mankind gradually reduced the relative importance of brute force in human affairs, while increasing the power of moral, spiritual, and intellectual factors. That was why the Jewish people, despite – or rather precisely because of – the fact that it had lost its state and country some two thousand years before, could nonetheless expect to exert a positive and important influence on the future development of mankind. For Dubnov, evolution did not mean endless conflict, bloody in tooth and claw, but on the contrary – beyond the inevitable ups and downs – the ultimate advance of man. He always remained a humanist, and even when he became a nationalist he retained his faith in universalism, in progress as the basic law of history.

In his scheme of things, the modern era ushered in by the French Revolution represented a new and higher stage of historical development, and Dubnov always retained his enthusiasm for the principle of the rights of man proclaimed so dramatically in 1789. The declaration of liberty and equality – meaning equality before the law, not social revolution – never lost its hallowed status in his eyes. In the 1880s he interpreted liberty primarily in terms of individual freedom and civil rights. From the 1890s he broadened the concept to include the right of all nations to equality and free development. He thus saw his nationalism as an extension, not a negation, of his deeply rooted and unwavering liberalism.

For him, the modern Jewish nationalism developed in Eastern Europe did not imply any disillusionment either with Western society or with Western values. He became highly critical, of course, of the "assimilationism" of Western Jews – meaning the claim that Jewry constituted a religious persuasion alone and not a nation – but he was never anything but a "Westerner."

Throughout his life Dubnov argued that the message that the Jewish people had brought, and could still bring, to the world combined the joint perspectives of the particular and the universal. The spiritual peaks of Jewish history had been reached when the barriers isolating the Jews

from the outside world had broken down and when the Jews had come to see the fate of their nation as inextricably linked to that of mankind as a whole. Such moments he always identified with biblical Prophecy, with Maimonides and – in marked contrast to the prevailing opinion in his own nationalist camp – with Moses Mendelssohn.³⁶ Thus, what he came to term “Prophetism” – the imperative demands of social justice and the vision of universal peace as overshadowing the demands of religious ritual – constituted yet another fixed principle in his world view.

Given this particular system of beliefs, then, it is hardly surprising that Dubnov found himself increasingly out of tune with the ideologies becoming dominant after 1881 in the Russian-Jewish world. He was an evolutionist, but Zionism, territorialism, and Marxism all spoke of social change in revolutionary terms. He was a liberal in an age when liberalism was under attack by Zionists (and proto-Zionists) for being impotent in the face of racial incitement, and by socialists for being at best a transitional stage on the way to a totally new order. And he was a populist, who thought in terms of the Jewish people everywhere and as a whole; in opposition to the Zionists or the territorialists, who focused primarily on the nation of the future, renewed in its own land; and as against the Bundists (and other Jewish Marxists), who stressed class divisions and class war.³⁷

However paradoxical it may seem – for he was only a child at the time – in many ways Dubnov would always remain a man of the 1860s. This may be explained in large part by the nature of his education. Because of his very late start in Russian elementary school, he found himself too old to enter the seminary for Jewish teachers in Vilna, and, despite enormous expenditures of time and effort, he could never gain entry to a university. As a result, he was basically self-taught, when it came to secular studies, and most of his early reading had to be clandestine, hidden from the eyes of both governmental and (even more so) Jewish communal authorities.³⁸

The works he devoured in his teens were largely of the kind which had held sway among the Russian intelligentsia in the previous decade.

³⁶ Compare Dubnov's assessments of Moses Mendelssohn over a span of almost sixty years: “Mendelson russkikh evreev,” *Razsvet* 30 (24 July 1881):1192; and *Vsemirnaia istoriia evreiskogo naroda* VII (1937):284–94.

³⁷ Sophie Dubnov's marriage to Henryk Erlich, an active Bundist and later a leader of the Bund in Poland, introduced this ideological conflict into the inner family circle, but close personal ties were maintained nonetheless. On the public debate between Dubnov and Erlich in the late 1930s, see Dubnov-Erlich, *Life and Work*, p. 229. Cf. p. 216.

³⁸ *Kniga zhizni*, I, 50–56.

Obtained and read conspiratorially, they made a profound and ineradicable impression. Thus, Dubnov's belief that evolutionary theory guaranteed human progress can be dated back to his reading of Comte, Buckle, and Spencer. His passionately held liberalism owed most to John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty*, which came upon the young Dubnov like a revelation from on high,³⁹ and his "Westernism" was reinforced by his early encounter with Dobroliubov, Pisarev, and Chernyshevsky. As for his Jewish populism, it too originated partly in Russian radical thought, but also in yet another discovery of his youth, Heinrich Graetz's *History of the Jewish People*. (Here, however, we are not dealing with a work popular in the 1860s, for Graetz's remarkable impact on the Russian-Jewish intelligentsia was only beginning to gain momentum in the late 1870s.)

Although Dubnov the political ideologist was thus in many ways out of step with his contemporaries – and even more so with the next generation – he was not entirely alone. Ahad Ha-Am, in particular, shared many of the same articles of faith – anti-utopian evolutionism, an organic, quasi-biological concept of national history – and they eventually became close friends. Dubnov the historian, however, was beyond question a unique figure in the Russian-Jewish world.

As he himself would frequently point out, the Jewish intelligentsia in Russia in the latter half of the nineteenth century was far too involved in current problems and in strategies for the future to concern itself with the past for its own sake. In an era of highly engagé politics, historical studies were bound to be seen as a superfluous luxury, unless they could be called in to reinforce party ideologies. "Hardly any educated people," wrote Dubnov in April 1881, "knows its own history as little . . . as the Jewish people."⁴⁰

But from the very first, Dubnov made it clear that he regarded the study of history not only as a means to understand the present and plan for the future but also as an end in itself.⁴¹ His interest in history had developed in early childhood, nurtured by his antipathy for the Talmud, by his

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 100–102.

⁴⁰ "Neskol'ko momentov v istorii razvitiia evreiskoi mysli," *Russkii Evrei* 16 (15 April 1881):629.

⁴¹ See, e.g., the viewpoint stated by Dubnov in his article on Isaac Baer Levinsohn: "To truly evaluate the achievement of great thinkers, it is essential to observe them in the context of their own epoch." And: "*Historico-critical* evaluation and substantive criticism are not the same. Historical criticism is *relative*, conditional; but logical or rational criticism is absolute and to apply it to historical figures would be false and unjust." ("Mendelson russkikh evreev," *Razsvet* 30 [24 July 1881]:1192; 36 [4 September 1881]:1429.)

love for biblical narrative, and by the discovery of a copy of *Yosipon* (a medieval Hebrew version of Josephus) in his grandfather's library.⁴²

Starting in 1881, an astonishing flow of Dubnov's articles on a broad range of topics in Jewish history appeared week after week in *Razsvet* and *Russkii Evrei*. Even though Dubnov would later dismiss these youthful efforts as "an immature youthful debut,"⁴³ they clearly revealed his passionate interest in the past, his urge to catch the imagination of the general public, his boundless energy, and his vaulting ambition to understand Jewish history as a single whole, which would become his hallmark as a historian. It was already apparent then that the author was not only an ideologue, an *intelligent*, but also a scholar-in-the-making, an intellectual.

What could not have been predicted, however, was that this provincial young man – poverty-stricken, with only an elementary school education, unable to enter (let alone teach in) a university, and hounded by the police – would actually create a new profession for himself as a free-lance but full-time historian of the Jewish people.

A number of outside factors combined with Dubnov's own personal inclination to make this career possible. Thus, for example, during the mid-1880s Dubnov had hoped to become a general European historian, and at one time, he had been tempted to write a full-length study of Condorcet,⁴⁴ but there was no way for him to finance the time and travel involved in such a project.

By contrast, by keeping up a steady output of articles on Jewish history, as well as political commentary and book reviews, for the Russian-Jewish journals, Dubnov could eke out a very modest living. True, from 1883 he was totally dependent on the one such periodical then extant, the monthly *Voskhod*, and its tight-fisted publisher, Adolph Landau. However, despite its chronic problems with the censor (it was closed for six months in 1891), *Voskhod* proved to have great staying power, and for over twenty years it formed the basis for Dubnov's life as a professional historian.⁴⁵

The exclusive concern with Jewish (as distinct from general) history which had been forced on Dubnov by circumstances now gradually

⁴² *Kniga zhizni*, I, 30–31.

⁴³ *Vsemirnaia istoriia evreiskogo naroda*, vol. 1 (Berlin, 1924), p.xix.

⁴⁴ *Kniga zhizni*, I, 187.

⁴⁵ On the Russian-language Jewish press and for an extensive examination of *Voskhod* and Landau's role, see Yehuda Slutsky, *Ha-itonut ha-yehudit-rusit ba-mea ha-tsha-esre* (Jerusalem, 1970); and Slutsky, *Ha-itonut ha-yehudit-rusit be-reshit ha-mea ha-esrim* (Tel-Aviv, 1978).

became his all-consuming interest. Working on his study of Hasidism in 1889 he noted in his diary: "I have stopped tormenting myself with [the] accursed questions. All my religion, philosophy, poetry are concentrated in this work."⁴⁶ In 1892, in a diary entry referring to his attempts to arouse public interest in the Russian-Jewish past, he stated: "I have, as it were, become a missionary for history."⁴⁷

Only after many years did Dubnov gradually begin to build up new sources of income. Starting in the mid-1890s, his textbook for use in Jewish schools in Russia, which was frequently reprinted, and a series of ever-expanding histories of the Jewish people brought in a small but steady trickle of royalties. After 1905 he started to lecture on Jewish history in unofficial institutions of higher learning in St. Petersburg, first at the Free University and then at Baron David Günzburg's Courses in Oriental Studies. And it was because of a similar post at the new Jewish People's University, obtained for him by Bolshevik well-wishers, that he was just able to keep body and soul together during the Civil War years of 1918–21. Finally, by the 1920s, the royalties on his books, then being published in several languages, and occasional articles in the New York Yiddish press (*Forverts, Tog*) provided the minimal financial independence he needed to live in Berlin and, later, in Riga.⁴⁸

Dubnov was always aware of what an unprecedented path he had carved out for himself. When *Ahad Ha-Am* was forced to take up employment with the Wissotsky Tea Company in 1902, Dubnov commented in his diary. "What a regime this is, in which an editor and outstanding writer has to become a businessman. Now I remain alone as a professional writer."⁴⁹ In his own way, then, he had created for himself a "home university,"⁵⁰ an ideal he had first discovered in 1881 in reading about Buckle's way of life as an independent man of letters.

Always presiding, as it were, over this home university was the dominating presence of Heinrich Graetz. Although the two men never met and do not appear to have corresponded, it would be hard to imagine a tutor having a more powerful or more fruitful influence on a student than Graetz exerted on Dubnov. All but overwhelmed, the pupil measured himself almost from the first against his master, seeking ways to go beyond him and somehow to emancipate himself. Before the eyes of the

⁴⁶ *Kniga zhizni*, I, 231.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 268.

⁴⁸ Dubnov noted in his diary on 31 January 1923: "For the first time in my life I have succumbed to an honorarium: 25 dollars for an article which at the present rate is one million marks." (*Ibid.*, III, 21.)

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, I, 405.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, I, 120.

homeless *ekstern* in St. Petersburg, Graetz loomed as a figure of gigantic proportions, the professional historian who combined meticulous scholarship with an all-encompassing vision, encyclopedic knowledge with the ability to popularize, limitless industry with imagination and inspiration.⁵¹

In a book-length essay, written in 1892 on the occasion of Graetz's death, Dubnov gave free rein to this sense of awe, noting that the great Breslau historian had been connected "inseparably to the heart of the people."⁵² He termed Graetz a "nationalist in the best sense . . . [which] in no way excludes universalist ideals."⁵³ Dubnov further observed that Graetz had been forced to mix his own clay and bake his own bricks before he could design and construct his "grandiose historical monument,"⁵⁴ a task "which only a man of genius possessed of the most diverse gifts could undertake."⁵⁵ Through his lifelong tie to Graetz, Dubnov became a bridge between German-Jewish academic scholarship – the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* – and the new school of Russian-Jewish historians, who grew up largely under his influence.⁵⁶

Given Dubnov's deep commitment to the ideal of objective scholarship, the relationship between his dual roles as historian and as political ideologist, as intellectual and as *intelligent* was bound to be both multifaceted and complex. In many ways, the interaction between his two personae proved fruitful, but it also involved inner conflicts and contradictions. While writing his history of the Jewish people, Dubnov would not infrequently find inspiration in the more dramatic events of his own day. For example, in 1905, he hurried to reach the chapter he had to write on

⁵¹ On Dubnov's relationship to Graetz, see Lionel Kochan, "Graetz and Dubnov: Two Jewish Historians in an Alien World," in C. Abramsky, ed., *Essays in Honour of E. H. Carr* (London, 1974), pp. 352–66; and Robert Seltzer, "From Graetz to Dubnov: The Impact of the East European Milieu on the Writing of Jewish History," in David Berger, ed., *The Legacy of Jewish Migration* (New York, 1983), pp. 49–60.

⁵² "Istoriograf evreistva: Genrikh Grets, ego zhizn i trudy," *Voskhod*, February 1892, p. 51.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, July 1892, p. III.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, March 1892, p. 66.

⁵⁶ Some of the Russian-Jewish historians who had been students of Dubnov or were influenced by him were Zalman Shazar [Rubashev], Julius Hessen, Elias Tcherikower, and Ben Zion Dinaburg [Dinur]. Among the students at Baron David Günzburg's Courses in Oriental Studies, where Dubnov taught, were Shazar, Joshua Guttmann, Yezekiel Kaufmann, and Solomon Zeitlin. *He-avar* 6 (1958) contains many essays on Baron David Günzburg and the Courses in Oriental Studies.

1789 in order to describe the French Revolution at the moment that he himself was living through the experience of a great insurrection.⁵⁷

The mounting wave of revolutionary activity in Russia also influenced Dubnov's attitude toward the Jewish revolt against the Romans in 66–73 C.E. His description of the revolt written in the 1890s and entitled simply, "The War with the Romans" tended to follow Josephus' interpretation,⁵⁸ but the volume he published in 1904 carried an account far more sympathetic to the Zealots and was called "The Great National War." It was replete with the highly charged terminology of contemporary Russia: the "revolutionary movement" (*revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie*), the "provisional government" (*vremennoe pravitel'stvo*), the "people's assembly" (*narodnoe sobranie*), and the "liberation movement" (*osvoboditel'noe dvizhenie*).⁵⁹ It was not that Dubnov wrote history as a form of propaganda, but that the excitement of the day made it much easier to aim for his goal of "comprehending the past as if it were as alive as today."⁶⁰

However, it was also part of what he called his "historist" creed to comprehend the present in historical terms.⁶¹ And his determination to measure contemporary issues against the yardstick of history was one more factor making it impossible for Dubnov to identify himself fully with – or, for that matter, to disassociate himself fully from – any of the major Jewish political parties which began to crystallize after 1881. Thus, for example, he could never bring himself to join the Zionist (or proto-Zionist) movement, if only because of his abiding antipathy to its doctrine of "negating the Diaspora" (*shlilat ha-galut*) and to its claim to possess a comprehensive solution to the Jewish question. However, because of his commitment to historical continuities, he soon came to see the aspiration to establish modern Jewish life in the ancient homeland, thus creating a synthesis of the old and the new, as an entirely natural enterprise which, however limited in scale, still deserved sympathy. As early as 1883 we find him hoping that the Hibbat Zion movement would

⁵⁷ *Kniga zhizni*, II, 31.

⁵⁸ Samuel Bek [Bäck] and Marcus Brann, *Evreiskaia istoriia ot konsta bibleiskogo perioda do nastoiashchego vremeni*, revised and supplemented by S. M. Dubnov (Odessa, 1896), I, 173.

⁵⁹ *Vseobshchaia istoriia evreev* (St. Petersburg, 1904), I, 336–38.

⁶⁰ *Kniga zhizni*, II, 194.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* On Dubnov's "historism," see Dubnov-Erich, *Life and Work*, p. 91; and Robert M. Seltzer, "Coming Home . . .," *AJS Review* 1 (1976):294–97.

“achieve something by its determined efforts” in Palestine, thus helping “to thin out the Pale of Settlement.”⁶²

Conversely, although from the 1890s Dubnov was a declared supporter of Diaspora autonomy, he could never bring himself to share the view of the majority of autonomists that Yiddish should be declared the sole national language of the Jewish people. He agreed that it should develop into a modern language to be used in Jewish education and in everyday life, but he could not countenance the idea of an official dethronement of Hebrew, the age-old language of the Jewish nation worldwide. In a debate with Moyshe Raves and other Bundists in 1916, he condemned their eagerness to break with “the ‘old,’ with the historic culture, with everything except speaking Yiddish. . . . A nation is not only a totality of individuals but also a totality of generations living out the entire evolution of its historical life.”⁶³

Logically enough, then, Dubnov repeatedly placed his hopes on projects for some unified organization which, standing above party, would take the broad and long view of the national interest – be it the Jewish National Assembly (of 1905), the Folkspartey (in 1907), the Russian Jewish Congress (of 1917), or the World Jewish Congress (of 1936).

If, however, Dubnov’s two roles reinforced each other in many ways, adding passion to his writing of history and a sense of historical continuity to his politics, this duality also brought with it major tensions. At one level, nothing more was involved than the mundane but nonetheless perpetual and nerve-racking problem of how to divide his time. Given the vast scope of his plans as a historian and the high levels of scholarship to which Dubnov aspired, he needed every possible moment to devote to his major academic projects. But he could not simply deny the pull of politics and public affairs. He believed that he had an important message to deliver and so had no right to isolate himself. As a result, there were times when his work as a historian slowed to a standstill, as in the summer of 1905.⁶⁴ More often, though, there were long periods when he took an oath to devote himself entirely to historical scholarship, or, as he put it in his diary in 1907, “to live out the rest of one’s days in uninterrupted work.”⁶⁵ This inner conflict could never be resolved as long as Dubnov lived in Russia. But his decision as an exile in 1922 to settle in Berlin

⁶² “Literaturnaia letopis’: Palestinofil’stvo i ego glavnyi propovednik,” *Voskhod*, July–August 1883, section 2, p. 34.

⁶³ *Kniga zhizni*, II, 198.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

rather than in independent Lithuania meant that he had finally decided to retreat into his “home university.”

A far more profound contradiction, though, threatened the attempt to combine the roles of historian and ideologist. From his very earliest writings, Dubnov devoted great attention to the tragic aspects of Jewish history, to the frequent expulsions from one country or another, to the coerced conversions, constant humiliations, and massacres. In doing so he was in part simply following Graetz, who had treated martyrdom as a central theme in his magnum opus. Beyond this, Dubnov was responding directly both to the pogroms which swept over southern Russia (particularly the Ukraine) in 1881–82, 1903–1906, and 1918–20, and to the great Jewish exodus from Russia to the New World during the period 1881–1914.

Furthermore, when he developed his own historiographical conception in opposition to Graetz, stressing sociology rather than theology, Dubnov did not lessen this emphasis, but, on the contrary, assigned pivotal weight to the mass migrations which had punctuated the history of the Diaspora. One after the other, the great “hegemonic” centers of Jewish life had been undermined or totally eliminated by their host societies and states, and time after time new communities had been built up elsewhere only by extraordinary effort.⁶⁶

This story, however heroic it appeared in Dubnov’s telling, was hardly of the kind to inspire optimism. Graetz had seen the work of Providence within the seemingly random flux of tragic events, but Dubnov always wrote secular history. Deprived of metaphysics, he had to rely on the laws of progress and of evolution in order to sustain the belief that this oft-repeated pattern of construction, destruction, and reconstruction had an inner logic, purpose, and message. It was this axiom, in turn, that buttressed his faith in the viability of Jewish autonomism.

In a real sense, then, Dubnov’s system of thought was always threatened by tension between his latently cyclical vision of Jewish history and his linear, albeit dialectical, concept of human advance. To what extent, though, he himself was fully aware of this potential contradiction

⁶⁶ Dubnov’s emphasis on Jewish history as marked by the rise and fall of “hegemonic centers” – transformations caused by socioeconomic and political change in the host societies – was set forth most systematically in the introduction to his *World History*, but it also shaped his earlier work, published in St. Petersburg in the years 1904–1906. (It should be noted that those sections of the *World History* which cover the period between the post-biblical era and the French Revolution in large part involved re-editing rather than a total rewriting of the earlier three volume work, *Vseobshchaia istoriia*.)

is unclear; certainly, for very long periods he saw catastrophe not as a threat to his faith in progress but as a challenge to be met and overcome.

In 1882 his acute sense of historical analogy inspired him to publish articles about the massacres perpetrated by Khmel'nitskii's armies in 1648–52,⁶⁷ the "Hep! Hep!" riots of 1819, and the great German-Jewish migration to the United States, which began in the 1820s.⁶⁸ Similarly, he was soon prompted – no doubt by the extraordinary upsurge of popular enthusiasm for a Jewish Exodus from Russia in the years 1881–82 – to bring out essays on the Sabbatean and Frankist movements.⁶⁹ (In these writings he anticipated a major preoccupation with Jewish mysticism, not only in his own subsequent work, but also in twentieth-century Jewish historiography as a whole.)

As Dubnov implied in the early 1880s, the lesson to be learned from these past events was that the Jewish people in Russia – like the German Jews faced by the Teutomania of 1819 and after – had to respond to disaster with caution, with reason, with measured steps and not with messianic fantasies. By flocking blindly after Shabbatai Zevi (in the very period that they had hounded Spinoza out of the community), the Jews had opted for the path of mysticism and obscurantism which would culminate in the disastrous rise of Hasidism as a mass movement in the eighteenth century. Instead of seeking to benefit from and to participate in the Enlightenment, they had deliberately elected to remain alone in their own Middle Ages.⁷⁰

From the late 1880s, Dubnov, of course, changed direction. The task of the historian, he now concluded, was not to seek out and learn from errors in the past conduct of the people but to discover and analyze the causes of mass behavior. In his full-scale study of Hasidism, published in *Voskhod* in the years 1888–91,⁷¹ Dubnov argued that the triumph of

⁶⁷ "Bedstviia evreev na Ukraine v 1648–1652 gg," *Razsvet* 24 (13 June 1882), 915–19; 25 (20 June 1882):956–61; 37 (12 September 1882):1434–36; 39 (28 September 1882):1498–1500; 40 (3 October 1882):1532–34.

⁶⁸ "Istoricheskii ocherk poseleniia evreev v Amerike," *Razsvet* 20 (16 May 1882, 759–62; 21 (23 May 1882):795–99.

⁶⁹ "Shabbatai Tsevi i psevdomeessianizm v XVII veke," *Voskhod*, July–August 1882, pp. 136–63; September–October 1882, pp. 13–44; "Iakov Frank i ego sekta khristianstvuiushchikh," January–February 1883, pp. 17–49; March 1883, pp. 71–93; April 1883, pp. 90–116; September 1883, pp. 44–67; October 1883, pp. 1–19.

⁷⁰ "Shabbatai Tsevi . . .," *Voskhod*, July–August 1882, p. 137.

⁷¹ "Vvedenie v istoriiu khasidizma," *Voskhod*, January–February 1888, pp. 83–100; March 1888, pp. 3–18; "Vozniknovenie khasidizma," May–June 1888, pp. 113–41; July 1888, pp. 81–100; August 1888, pp. 3–21; September 1888, pp. 3–16; October 1888, pp. 27–44; "Vozniknovenie tsadikizma," September 1889, pp. 3–21; October 1889, pp. 3–18;

mysticism in Jewish life had to be understood as the natural reaction of the Jewish people, of their collective consciousness, to the destruction of Ukrainian Jewry by Khmel'nitskii.

By applying the methods of social psychology, the observer could penetrate the inner workings of the nation's life. Religious enthusiasm, being the product of emotion and faith, of the deepest yearnings of the masses, could reveal more to the historian than could the study of rational thought: "It is in the mystic tendencies of a given epoch that the general situation of the people, as it then was, finds its clearest expression."⁷²

Dubnov's history of Hasidism, which was first published in book form in 1930 and constitutes a central landmark in modern Jewish historiography, opened a new phase in Dubnov's life.⁷³ The decade and a half from 1888 to 1903 constituted the *anni mirabiles* of his intellectual creativity. Dubnov had come to maturity and was pioneering new paths only sporadically explored by Graetz.⁷⁴ Given his new determination to describe the past not as the eternal conflict between philosophical truth and error but in terms of mass psychology, he could now openly criticize the way in which the great Breslau historian had dismissed Jewish mysticism as a deviation from the essence of Judaism. As Dubnov wrote in 1892,

If Graetz gives credit to the study of the Talmud in that it preserved the Jewish *mind* from stagnation . . . then how much more should he have recognized that the Kabala saved Jewish religious *feeling* from fossilization. . . . The Kabala, it is true, intoxicated, but it also inspired strength.⁷⁵

These words encapsulate the central theme developed by Dubnov in the 1890s. In times of extreme adversity, the Jewish people had in the past found new ways to maintain its sense of purpose, its hold on life, its faith. It was for the historian to understand and explain, not to condemn, these collective reactions to mass suffering, however repellent they might appear to the modern mind. But Dubnov argued that what had been true of the past applied equally to the present. Faced by the savage enmity

January 1890, pp. 23–42; March 1890, pp. 83–100; "Istoriia khasidskogo raskola," April–May 1890, pp. 74–92; June 1890, pp. 37–45; July 1890, pp. 67–84; August 1890, pp. 3–20; September 1890, p. 33–41; October 1890, pp. 3–24; November 1890, pp. 43–71; December 1890, pp. 125–45; January 1891, pp. 58–74; February 1891, pp. 95–115; October 1891, pp. 6–36; November 1891, pp. 121–44; December 1891, pp. 92–112.

⁷² "Vvedenie . . .," *Voskhod*, January–February 1888, p. 86.

⁷³ *Toldot ha-basidut be-tkufat tsmihata ve-gidula*, 3 vols. (Tel-Aviv, 1930–31).

⁷⁴ But see Graetz's study of Frankism: *Frank und die Frankisten: eine Sekten-Geschichte aus der letzten Hälfte des vorigen Jahrhunderts*, Jahresbericht des jüdischtheologischen Seminars (Breslau, 1868).

⁷⁵ "Istoriograf evreistva," *Voskhod*, May 1892, pp. 62–63.

of the tsarist regime, the Jewish people had once again to withdraw into itself, fall back on its own psychological and spiritual resources, produce a positive inner response to the external challenge. For the rapidly growing Russian-Jewish intelligentsia, profoundly estranged from the traditional faith, religion could no longer serve as a primary source of inspiration. Only a real understanding of the Jewish past, a sense of its continuity and rhythm, could endow the modern Jew with a sense of allegiance, direction, and hope. "The Jewish national idea," Dubnov wrote in 1891, "is based primarily on *historical consciousness*."⁷⁶ Or again: "The main support of national unity is *historical consciousness*."⁷⁷

Here, too, Dubnov clearly felt that he was advancing into areas largely unexplored by Graetz. To open up the history of the Jews in Russia and Poland from the earliest times until the present (a relatively marginal theme in Graetz's book) now became his primary ambition. The Russian Empire of his day, after all, contained most of the Jews in the world, and yet the history of that community, stretching back to the Middle Ages, had not been systematically studied. It was often held in contempt as a story of obscurantism and superstition, and was all but unknown even to the vast majority of educated Jews. In a long article of 1891 (also published as a booklet), he drew up the blueprint for what he now envisaged as his life's work.⁷⁸

The immediate task, he wrote, was to hunt down and organize systematically the primary materials scattered in a variety of collections – governmental and ecclesiastical, Russian and Polish, communal and private, *misnagdish* and Hasidic, elitist and popular, published and unpublished. Dubnov's enthusiasm was such that he was able to bring about the establishment of the Historical-Ethnographical Commission in 1892. Among its founding members were Maxim Vinaver, Leon Bramson, and Julius Brutzkus.⁷⁹

This undertaking was only the first of a long line of such organizations and initiatives inspired by Dubnov in order to advance the study of Russian-Jewish history. Perhaps the most notable among them was the important journal *Evreiskaia Starina*, which he founded in 1909. YIVO, established in 1925, was in large part the creation of his ex-students and

⁷⁶ *Ob izuchenii istorii russkikh evreev* (St. Petersburg, 1891), p. 6.

⁷⁷ "Chto takoe evreiskaia istoriia?" *Voskhod*, October–November 1893, pp. 120–21.

⁷⁸ *Ob izuchenii istorii russkikh evreev*, 1891.

⁷⁹ The Istoriko-etnograficheskaiia komissiiia was established originally as a subsection of OPE, The Society for the Dissemination of Enlightenment among the Jews in Russia. In 1908 it became the Evreiskoe istoriko-etnograficheskoe obshchestvo.

disciples.⁸⁰ And, as a senior academic associate, he followed its growth closely from its foundation until his last days. In letters written in 1940 he told of his plans to move to Vilna in order to work and teach at the Institute, which had suffered greatly from the German conquest of Poland.⁸¹

From his belief that only knowledge of the past, of the "collective historical fate,"⁸² could save the present-day Jew from "corrosive pessimism,"⁸³ it was only a short step to his theory of Diaspora autonomy. Salo W. Baron has argued that Dubnov's historical writings paid "special attention to Jewish self-government . . . due to his own political 'autonomism.'"⁸⁴ But in all probability, it was the constant interaction between Dubnov as historian and as ideologist which led to his heightened interest in Jewish autonomy both as a historical phenomenon and as a political program.

Thus in his essay of 1891 he could specifically criticize Graetz and the entire school of German-Jewish historians for their failure to use municipal archives in order to examine the "internal way of life and the self-government" of the Jewish communities.⁸⁵ By 1894 Dubnov was beginning to publish rare documents relating to the history of communal self-rule in Eastern Europe, which, he argued, had "*civilized* the Jewish masses, disciplined them, maintained the idea among them of strict legality and law."⁸⁶

What Dubnov did in his *Letters on Old and New Jewry* (which began to appear three years later) was to argue powerfully that national self-government for the Jews in the Diaspora was a phenomenon even more suited to the modern than to the medieval world. The Jews had every right to declare themselves "*not a state within a state but a nation within a nation*,"⁸⁷ "*an equal member among the European nations*."⁸⁸ Given the increasingly vociferous demands for greater freedom by the oppressed nationalities within the multinational states, it could only be a question

⁸⁰ On Dubnov's relationship to YIVO, see Dubnov-Erich, *Life and Work*, pp. 215, 216-17, 219, 221, 225, 228, 238, 239, 244.

⁸¹ Letter dated 20 May 1940 to Yehoshua H. Rawnitzki, in Simon Rawidowicz, ed., *Sefer Shimon Dubnov* (Jerusalem, 1954), p. 331.

⁸² *Ob izuchenii istorii russkikh evreev*, p. 6. ⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁸⁴ Salo W. Baron, *History and Jewish Historians* (Philadelphia, 1964), p. 78.

⁸⁵ *Ob izuchenii istorii russkikh evreev*, p. 15.

⁸⁶ "Istoricheskie soobshcheniia: podgotovlenye raboty dlia istorii russkikh evreev," *Voskhod*, February 1894, p. 104.

⁸⁷ "Pis'ma o starom i novom evreistve," *Voskhod*, January 1898, p. 31.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

of time until a new constitutional system, granting equality to all national groups, was attained. "This is not a dream," he declared in 1899, "but a historical necessity,"⁸⁹ and the Jews, too, could fit into the new order of things if they only chose to do so. Although the fact is often overlooked, Dubnov regarded his concept as suited not only to Eastern Europe, but in many ways even more to the liberal West, and particularly to the United States.⁹⁰

It was the great error of the Zionist movement, he declared, that it denied these realities, ignoring the opportunity contained therein for the "political rebirth of the ten million Jews in the Diaspora,"⁹¹ and that it "despaired of historical progress, of the moral improvement of mankind."⁹²

In the 1890s, then, Dubnov envisaged history, be it universal or Jewish, as moving neither in circles nor along a straight line, but as making a complex ascent by sharp zigzags. There was no such thing as unbroken progress, but mankind (and the Jewish nation within it) had proved its ability to surmount the greatest catastrophes and to continue to advance. For this reason, he could look forward with great confidence. He even argued that the Jewish nation, lacking a territory of its own, represented the highest form in the evolution of nationalities, dependent as it was entirely on "cultural-historical" and "spiritual" factors,⁹³ with "no possibility of striving for political victories, territorial annexations or the subjugation of other peoples."⁹⁴ The idea of a Jewish "mission" to mankind, which he had once so admired in the thought of modern Judaism in the West, thus implicitly reemerged here, with the role of the Jewish people now being to demonstrate that a nation could exist in total separation from statehood and so serve as a force for peace rather than war.⁹⁵

As the year 1900 arrived, Dubnov noted in his diary that if the eighteenth century had witnessed an intellectual revolution and the nineteenth had been an age of revolutionary change in politics, science, and technology, then the twentieth century in all probability would become an era of

⁸⁹ *Voskhod*, June 1899, p. 60.

⁹⁰ *Voskhod*, December 1901, pp. 12–16. Dubnov here predicted correctly that the Jews in the Austrian Empire, particularly in Galicia, would soon establish their own "national political party" to compete for seats in the Reichsrat; and he argued that the Jews in the United States "can and should" elect representatives to the Congress with "strictly national instructions" (p. 16).

⁹¹ *Voskhod*, March 1898, p. 136.

⁹² *Voskhod*, June 1899, p. 59.

⁹³ *Voskhod*, November 1897, p. 14.

⁹⁴ *Voskhod*, January 1898, p. 19.

⁹⁵ *Voskhod*, November 1897, pp. 13–21.

“moral” and “ethical revolution.”⁹⁶ A mere three years later, in April 1903, Kishinev became the scene of a pogrom in which dozens of Jews were brutally murdered and hundreds were wounded. This event proved to be only the first in a series of such attacks, which culminated in late October 1905 with pogroms in hundreds of places, leaving thousands dead.

Dubnov, who had been living in nearby Odessa since 1890, felt the impact of the Kishinev pogrom to the full. A committee in that city, consisting of Ahad Ha-Am, Bialik, Dizengoff, Ben-Ammi, Rawnitzki, and Dubnov, issued a manifesto to the Jews of Russia, calling on them to prepare armed resistance against future pogroms. The committee sent Bialik to Kishinev to report on what exactly had happened during the slaughter.⁹⁷ Dubnov responded very quickly, both in 1903 and in 1905, publishing his analysis of the events in two influential articles: “A Historic Moment,” which appeared within weeks of the Kishinev pogrom; and “Lessons from the Terrible Days,” printed after the October massacres.

Now, for the first time, the latent tension between the historian and the ideologist in Dubnov became painfully manifest. He found himself trapped between a tragic view of the recent events and a political philosophy based on the axiom of human progress.⁹⁸ As his own life became increasingly entangled in the cataclysms of twentieth-century Europe, this paradox became ever more painful. However, given his beliefs and his character, it was one from which there could be no escape.

In some respects Dubnov reacted to the pogroms of 1903–06 in ways very reminiscent of his stance in the years 1881–84. Now, as then, he saw emigration to the United States as the only response which could lead to an immediate improvement in the lot of the Russian Jews. He again called for a concerted effort to organize the migration. He also still argued, as he had in the 1880s, that although colonization in Palestine deserved support, it could in no way solve the problems of the vast majority of the world’s

⁹⁶ *Kniga zhizni*, I, 371.

⁹⁷ On Dubnov’s response to the Kishinev pogrom, see Dubnov-Erich, *Life and Work*, pp. 122–23.

⁹⁸ Aaron Steinberg (who, *inter alia*, translated Dubnov’s *World History* from Russian into German) noted this tension, writing that Dubnov saw “world history as a whole as progressing but not as progress. . . . The author, who set out specifically not to write a history of spirit and suffering [eine Geistes- und Leidensgeschichte], found himself compelled to do just that by an inner truth and by his sensitivity to his subject matter. Thus his work finds expression in words of messianic longing.” (Aaron Steinberg, “Die weltanschaulichen Voraussetzungen der jüdischen Geschichtsschreibung,” in Ismar Elbogen et al., eds., *Festschrift zu Simon Dubnows siebzigstem Geburtstag* [Berlin, 1930], pp. 39–40.)

Jews. Finally, he once more insisted that the struggle for emancipation, for equal rights in Russia, had to be pursued with redoubled energy, for many millions of Jews would inevitably remain in that country.

What was most striking, though, was the radical change of tone in the Dubnov of 1903–06. Some twenty years before, he had used his gift for historical analogy in order to argue against panic. But now he himself wrote in a white heat, and the parallels from the past which poured onto the page clearly suggested that the Jews in Russia were eternally fated to suffer periodic massacre. He rejected out of hand the thesis that the pogroms were simply inspired by the tsarist regime, a move in its counterrevolutionary strategy. He insisted that they were to a large extent the manifestations of popular hatred deeply rooted in history and in the collective psyche.

If in the 1880s he had been alarmed by the messianism of such proto-Zionists as Peretz Smolenskin, he now turned with real fury on the Marxist camp, which, as he saw it, was being carried away by the revolutionary triumphs of 1905 and, in large part, had come to expect the imminent triumph of socialism in Russia. Addressing the Bund, he asked,

How has this mystical *Russian* nationalism taken such a hold on you Jewish Social Democrats, our brothers and sisters, who have only this minute felt one of the historic “missions” of the Russian people on your broken skulls, making 1905 a parallel to 1648 (note 1648 not 1848)?⁹⁹

The thousands and tens of thousands of workers, peasants, *meshchane*, and *raznochintsy*, across the entire expanse of Russia from Odessa to Tomsk, who broke Jewish heads, tore out the eyes of children, raped women and tore them to pieces, burnt, looted... did they do all this as counterrevolution? No, they did what their fathers and their brothers have done in years past [and] will do again in the future under favorable conditions...¹⁰⁰

Writing immediately after Kishinev, Dubnov even appeared to cast doubt on his belief in evolutionary progress:

We are again living through events which show that history moves more along a circular route than along a straight line. Today the martyrology of the Jews in southern Russia has come full circle – from the massacre in Uman of 1768 to 1903... We have reached a fateful frontier... In our history... the signposts dividing one epoch from another have been stained with the blood [of our martyrs, the heroes of passive resistance]. The Crusades, the Inquisition, the expulsions,

⁹⁹ “Uroki strashnykh dnei,” *Voskhod [Nedel’naia khronika]* 47–48 (1 December 1905):9.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

Khmelnitskii, the Haidamaks, . . . the repressive legislation, [the persecution by the Russian regime] – such are the dominant marks of division in our history.¹⁰¹

The Jewish masses, he wrote in December 1905, understand the truth better than do the socialist intelligentsia:

Take into account this direct sense of the people, this psyche of the sufferers, these emotions and moods, which, more than abstract ideas, are the driving force of history! And this popular consciousness, which grasps recent events more correctly, tells us: “Do not trust Amalek, be it as the government, or as the people, because the old Russia can reappear in the new!”¹⁰²

It can be argued that given this bitter indignation, this sense of betrayal and fateful foreboding, Dubnov should, according to all logic, have now radically reviewed his political program. To have any chance of lasting success, the plan for Jewish national autonomy required the establishment of a stable, sophisticated, and tolerant parliamentary regime. How could the Russian people – which Dubnov feared as politically primitive, predisposed to mass violence, and heir to age-old national hatreds – possibly establish, let alone maintain, so complex and fragile a constitutional system? His own analysis appeared to require a sharp change of direction. To argue, as he did with force, that another era had begun in Jewish history, that once again the Jews had to move on, settle in new lands of refuge, and reestablish their communal life, surely suggested that mass emigration had to become the top political priority.

The two most important new centers of the future, Dubnov now predicted with great confidence, would be the Jewish communities in the United States, where many millions would settle, and in Palestine, where a far smaller society would revive the Hebrew language and create an unadulterated national life.¹⁰³ He himself insisted that an organized effort was essential to ensure that the emigration went as smoothly as possible, that it be directed not to Western Europe – where it would only inflame anti-Semitism – but overseas.¹⁰⁴ He argued that the emigrants should not settle in over-crowded centers like New York but in selected places

¹⁰¹ “Istoricheskii moment,” *Voskhod [Nedel’naia khronika]* 21 (22 May 1903):1. The phrases in square brackets appear in the 1907 version and were presumably omitted in the original because of censorship. (*Pis’ma o starom i novom evreistve*, p. 281 and note.) Cf. below p. 121.

¹⁰² *Voskhod [Nedel’naia khronika]* 47–48 (1 December 1905):6.

¹⁰³ *Pis’ma o starom i novom evreistve* (St. Petersburg, 1907), pp. 358–61.

¹⁰⁴ “Istoricheskii moment,” *Voskhod [Nedel’naia khronika]* 21 (22 May 1903):5.

in the American West, where their presence would not encourage anti-alienism.¹⁰⁵ In December 1906 he even said outright that “regulating the emigration movement . . . could become our main national task if it were to turn out in the near future that the temporary triumph of black political reaction made the large-scale transformation of Russia impossible.”¹⁰⁶

In reality, though, Dubnov kept his basic political ideology intact not only in the period preceding the First World War but also in the inter-war years 1919–39. The Folkspartey, which he helped to found in 1906, devoted only two words in its lengthy program to “directing emigration”;¹⁰⁷ and, for his part, Dubnov would always maintain that Diaspora autonomism was of crucial importance for the future of the Jewish people in Eastern Europe and elsewhere.

As first Russia and, after 1914, Europe as a whole stumbled from one catastrophe to another, Dubnov developed more sympathy for Zionism, and after 1917 he often talked of eventually settling in Palestine himself.¹⁰⁸ But he was still repelled by the claims that Zionism offered an overall answer to the Jewish question – be it politically, as understood by Herzl, or culturally, as Ahad Ha-Am would have it.¹⁰⁹ The most that he granted was the strictly hypothetical concession that “if we possessed some cosmic lever which could transfer the Diaspora to a ‘Jewish state’ we would be delighted to use it.”¹¹⁰ As for territorialism, he regarded the idea of selecting and colonizing some newly chosen piece of land as antihistorical and as nothing more than an exercise in idle utopianism.¹¹¹

Dubnov sought to close the gap between his pessimistic appraisal of the Jewish situation in Russia and his essentially optimistic constitutionalist strategies by emphasizing the role of time. It was wildly unrealistic, he now argued, to expect a basic transformation of Russian society to take place over any but a very prolonged period. Even if the tsarist regime was forced to grant equal rights, it would take many decades for a population

¹⁰⁵ *Voskhod* [Nedel'naia khronika] 22 (29 May 1903):4.

¹⁰⁶ *Volkspartei: Evreiskaia narodnaia partiia* [December 1906] (St. Petersburg, 1907), p. 15.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

¹⁰⁸ See, e.g., his diary entry for 16 July 1919, *Kniga zhizni*, II, 295. Here Dubnov states the hope that he might be “among the saved,” those settling in “Erets-Yisrael,” but asks whether he has the right to leave behind the mass of Jews in the Diaspora, “to cast off the doomed.” Cf. p. 339.

¹⁰⁹ “‘Utverzhdienie golosa’ (Po povodu ‘Otritsaniia golosa’ Akhad Gaama),” *Evreiskii mir* 5 (1909):48–58.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

¹¹¹ On the distinction made by Dubnov between “real” and “utopian” emigration, see, e.g., *Pis'ma o starom i novom evreistve*, p. 360.

of former serfs to become a population of responsible citizens, of free men. The examples of Germany, Austria, and France demonstrated that formal emancipation did not guarantee the Jews full equality, and in Russia the process would be more difficult: "How much time is needed for this metamorphosis, for the reeducation of these savage masses in the spirit of a constitutional *Rechtsstaat*, for the end to the rule of the fist, which has penetrated so deeply into Russian life?"¹¹²

To this question he could give no definite answer, but there could be no letup in the fight for equal rights, for full emancipation, for national self-government. There was no other choice for the millions of Jews who would always live in Eastern Europe, and eventually those who battled under the banner of "self-help" and "self-defense"¹¹³ could expect to win their reward: "We shall fight for these rights as a nation which respects itself. . . . And however long this struggle for the right may take, we nevertheless will not lose our faith in the future triumph of our cause – the cause of truth and justice."¹¹⁴

The shock effect that the pogroms and the aborted revolution produced on Dubnov not only challenged his most basic ideological assumptions but also contributed to a change in his way of life and, it would seem, in his development as a historian. A few months after the Kishinev pogrom, he decided to move with his family from Odessa to Vilna, and three years later they returned once again to St. Petersburg. Dubnov had hoped to find a quiet refuge in Lithuania, away from the turmoil of Jewish life in the Odessa of 1903,¹¹⁵ but as a result of these moves he found himself entangled in a web of organizational and political obligations in the capital, where he was to remain until 1922.

Time would prove that his thirteen years in Odessa had been the most creative period in his life. The mild climate, the calm domesticity, the active Jewish community, and the circle of friends (above all, Ahad Ha-Am and Mendelev Sforim) with whom he could discuss and exchange ideas all served to inspire his most original work as both ideologist and historian.¹¹⁶ Away from Odessa, Dubnov tended more to defend than to rethink his preconceived ideas.

¹¹² "Uroki strashnykh dnei," *Voskhod [Nedel'naia khronika]* 47–48 (1 December 1905):4.

¹¹³ "Istoricheskii moment," *Voskhod [Nedel'naia khronika]* 21 (22 May 1903):2. The term "self-defense" appeared in the 1907 version, but not in the original (*Pis'ma o starom i novom evreistve*, p. 282).

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 290. This passage did not appear in the 1903 version.

¹¹⁵ *Kniga zhizni*, I, 414.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, I, 246–56. See below, pp. 90–96, 124.

In the years following the revolution he also abandoned what he had for so long seen as his life's mission as a historian. He now merged his work on Russian-Jewish history with that on the world history of the Jews, which he had hitherto seen primarily as an exercise in popularization. Thus, the writing of his *Modern History of the Jews*, which covered the period from the French Revolution to the most recent times (and would eventually serve as the last three volumes of the *World History*), occupied much of his energies in the years 1910–13 and was completed only in 1920.¹¹⁷

This work, as Raphael Mahler has rightly pointed out,¹¹⁸ can be seen as Dubnov's attempt to demonstrate – to himself, perhaps, most of all – how the bitter realities of Jewish life in tsarist Russia could be reconciled with his own faith in progress. By his division of the book into broad periods of liberalism and emancipation, broken up by intervals of counterrevolution and reaction, he drove home the view that, however tragic, even major setbacks could do no more than delay the onward march of mankind. Seen from this perspective the Russian experience was a determined, prolonged, but ultimately futile stand by the tsarist regime and its supporters against the constitutionalism advancing from the West.

Dubnov was fated, of course, to live through the subsequent crises of Russian and European Jewry: first in St. Petersburg, then in Berlin, and finally in Riga. During the years 1914–21 he experienced firsthand the World War, the Revolution, and the Civil War; and then in the period 1929–41, the rise and expanding influence of Nazism. In essence, he reacted very much as he had done when faced by the pogroms and aborted revolution of 1903–07.

He again remained unwaveringly loyal to the basic articles of his faith, to the liberal creed, to his humanistic form of Jewish nationalism, to his belief in the ultimate salvation of mankind. And now, too, he searched the horizon constantly for a break in the storm clouds. In the summer of 1917, to take one example, he elaborated in detail the principles of national autonomy in his brochure *What Do the Jews Want?*, declaring: "On 27

¹¹⁷ *Noveishaia istoriia evreiskogo naroda: ot frantsuzkoi revoliutsii do nashikh dnei*, 3 vols. (Riga, 1937–38). This work was first published in full in Berlin in 1923 in Russian, German, and Hebrew editions. A volume covering the period 1789–1881 had appeared in St. Petersburg in 1914.

¹¹⁸ Raphael Mahler, "Shitat Dubnov u-mifalo be-historiografiya ha-yehudit," in Aaron Steinberg, ed., *Simon Dubnow: The Man and His Work* (Paris, 1963), pp. 57–72, particularly p. 71.

February the eyes of Russian people were opened. . . . The new revolution liberated all the peoples of Russia. . . . The Jewish people became a member with equal rights in the family of nations in Russia.”¹¹⁹

When in the winter of 1918–19 all seemed lost at home, Dubnov still looked with hope to the West, to the postwar order being constructed by Woodrow Wilson and the other Allied leaders. “Somewhere far off in Paris,” he noted in his diary on 31 January 1919, “the foundations of a new historical epoch are being laid; a peace conference is deciding the world’s problems.”¹²⁰

Similarly, in the early 1920s he found satisfaction in the fact that his ideas on Jewish self-government were being partially implemented in the newly independent Baltic and Polish states. (An entry in his diary on 20 May 1920 noted that his “ideal of autonomy for the twentieth century” was actually being realized.)¹²¹ Even in July 1933, when he was about to flee Nazi Germany, he could write that at least the terrible wave of anti-Semitism had forced many German Jews to reconsider their assimilationist strategy, noting that his own *Weltgeschichte* was now “being read in enforced leisure time by those intellectuals – unemployed lawyers, doctors, etc. – who previously would not give a thought to our national problem,” and that it was providing them some “spiritual support.”¹²²

However, as during the 1905 revolution, Dubnov’s sensitivity, developed to a high level by a lifetime of historical study, would not permit him to find refuge in the tenets of his own optimistic ideology. The same fury which he had earlier unleashed against the utopian maximalism of the Marxist socialists kept him in a state of unabating outrage as he observed the rise of the Bolsheviks in 1917 and their subsequent consolidation of power. As early as 14 May 1917 he noted privately that

The degeneration of the Russian revolution into Pugachevshchina is evident in everything. The European revolution in Russian translation means a pogrom on the left together with a reactionary pogrom from the right. What will happen to Russia in a month or two? Civil war and terror, brought by the soldiers fleeing the front; state bankruptcy; real famine.¹²³

With the establishment of the Bolshevik dictatorship in October, and during the next four years, his diary entries expressed profound bitterness at the overthrow of the short experiment in liberty. Even though

¹¹⁹ *Chego khotiat evrei* (St. Petersburg, 1917), pp. 9–10.

¹²⁰ *Kniga zbitni*, II, 283.

¹²² *Ibid.*, III, 120.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 317.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, II, 226.

he knew that he was putting his own personal freedom and even his life in danger from the Cheka, Dubnov lashed out at the new regime variously as “oprichniki”,¹²⁴ “the old Moscow with Ivan the Terrible at its head,”¹²⁵ “the most infamous of all despotisms,”¹²⁶ “a handful of usurpers,”¹²⁷ “a mass of Autocrats,”¹²⁸ “the work of latter-day Razins and Pugachevs,”¹²⁹ an “Egypt”¹³⁰ in which everybody had become a “serf,”¹³¹ “Asiatic socialism,”¹³² “*kulak* socialism,”¹³³ and (referring to the Red Army outside Warsaw) a “Hannibal at the Gates.”¹³⁴

For a long time Dubnov hoped passionately for the defeat of the Red Army, but when he belatedly absorbed the news of the unprecedented pogroms perpetrated against the Jews by the anti-Bolshevik forces in the South, he had to admit that the Whites were “really Black pogromists and not heroes.”¹³⁵ By contrast, he demonstrated remarkable perspicacity in grasping at once that the draconian terms of the Versailles Treaty could only lead to the perpetuation of conflict in Europe. “It is something terrible . . .,” he wrote on 14 May 1919, “worse than Bismarck’s treaty of 1871. . . . And this is done by the World League, the League of Nations. . . . I am burying one more dream, the dream of triumphant pacifism, of a holy alliance of the nations for eternal peace.”¹³⁶

Steeled by his personal experience in the years 1914–21, Dubnov watched the political development of Europe and the world in the inter-war years with the deepest anxiety. He believed Bolshevism to be unredeemable and could see no hope for the future of the Jewish community in Russia. He saw “tsarist injustice and pogroms being reborn in Poland”¹³⁷ and acknowledged in 1922 that by moving to Berlin he had placed himself on a “volcano.”¹³⁸ Germany, he wrote a year later, “for all its culture, can sink either into a Black or into a Red sea,”¹³⁹ and in the same year he noted that the “hope for European peace is flickering out.”¹⁴⁰ Even America, he had to admit, had shockingly disappointed expectations. If 1881 had seen the beginning of the great Jewish migration from Eastern

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 262.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 250.

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 351.

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 333.

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 245.

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 340.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 245. Dubnov noted here that the hope for Palestine following the English conquest of Jerusalem was “a point of light in the Egyptian darkness.” Cf. p. 329.

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 347.

¹³² Ibid., p. 283.

¹³³ Ibid., p. 263.

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 320.

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 313 (diary entry 2 February 1920).

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 289.

¹³⁷ Ibid., III, 12.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 15.

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 30.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 20.

Europe, then 1925 (following the passage of the new Immigration Act) marked its end.¹⁴¹ And in the 1930s, he was quick to adopt the concept of totalitarianism (or “totalism,”¹⁴² as he termed it) to describe the forces of darkness closing over Europe from the Stalinist Left as well as from the Nazi and Fascist Right.

Given the relentless unfolding of tragedy which overtook East European Jewry from 1914 and the Jews of Central Europe from 1933, it is hardly surprising that Dubnov often found himself wracked by doubt. Was it possible in such times to maintain belief in the triumph of humanity, universalist nationalism, the rule of law? His diaries reveal at least some of this agony of the soul. “It will be terrible to die,” he wrote of the World War in August 1917, “if there is no certainty that this deluge will not repeat itself, if there is no certainty that peace will reign between states, nations, classes.”¹⁴³

Dubnov asked himself, in December 1919, whether his old friend and colleague Michael I. Kulisher had maintained his belief in progress right up to his recent death. “If so, then it was easier for the one who has gone than for those remaining behind.”¹⁴⁴ An entry dated Shavuot 1920 described Dubnov looking up at the great sky of late spring in Petrograd in wonder and doubt: “Is this the attraction of the part to the whole or is it all a mirage? Perhaps the soul of man is full but the world is empty, soulless?”¹⁴⁵ A year later, at a gathering called to mark the fortieth anniversary of Dubnov’s first publications, the assembled guests found themselves, as the author noted, compelled to “try to soften my pessimism.”¹⁴⁶

In 1900 he had looked forward to the new century for the completion of tasks neglected by the last, but now he found himself reluctantly drawn to the idea that this was to be a century of destruction. “The streams of lava,” he wrote in 1919, “are flowing over the old culture, clearing a way for the new – will it be better or worse? I am inclined to think worse.”¹⁴⁷ He returned to this thought when he published the first volume of his memoirs some fifteen years later.

An entire epoch, our epoch on the edge of two centuries, is at an end, and many signs give grounds for fearing that the twentieth century will not be the continuation but the negation of the nineteenth. The ways of thought associated with that century – a century into which my life and that of my contemporaries

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, II, 233.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 317.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 292.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 144.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 304.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 338.

is interwoven – have for the time being been forcefully severed by a historical cataclysm.¹⁴⁸

Nonetheless, as in the post-Kishinev period, Dubnov refused to abandon, or even modify, his basic political credo and program. Once more, he relied on time as the only escape from the trap set for him by the historical catastrophe overtaking Europe and European Jewry in particular. The metaphor of the Flood occurs in his diary – a period of total destruction, but one that was followed by a new and higher stage in man's development. "In all probability," he noted in June 1919, "we will again have to go through the stage of a culture low in its ethics before reaching the higher level."¹⁴⁹ He ended his public eulogy on Kulisher with the call "to keep our faith [in progress]; otherwise reason will be eclipsed, and God in the souls of men will die."¹⁵⁰

In the final volume of his autobiography, published after the outbreak of the Second World War, Dubnov spoke with assurance of the future era which would in its turn negate the present epoch: "A pessimist, not expecting anything good from life, often acquiesces in all its horrors. . . . A true idealist, not losing faith in the final triumph of good, never acquiesces in the temporary triumph of evil and preserves his 'divine discontent.'"¹⁵¹

Of the Jewish people, in its time of greatest trial, he declared: "Our great sorrow is that we have been persecuted in every generation. Our greatness lies in the fact that we outlived the persecutions and the persecutors, all the Hamans of our history."¹⁵² He predicted that the time would come when

this generation of deformed youth, all this mass of pogromists called Iron Guards, Storm Troopers . . . , this generation of the moral desert, will either be corrected or will die out [and] a new society based on the love for man, on brotherhood and social justice, will be born in Europe.¹⁵³

But for all his determination to remain undaunted even as his world collapsed about him, Dubnov could not sustain the extraordinary originality and productivity which had marked his life in the period before 1914 and particularly during the Odessa years. More and more, he devoted his time between the two world wars to overseeing the revision and publication of his major, but largely pre-existing, works – his history of Hasidism, the *Letters on Old and Modern Jewry*, his *World History of the Jewish*

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., I, vii.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 304.

¹⁵² Ibid., p. 150.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., II, 292.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., III, 154.

¹⁵³ Ibid., p. 153.

*People, the Pinkes of the Jews of Lithuania*¹⁵⁴ – in a variety of languages and editions. As he explained when he published the first volume of his autobiography in 1934, it was of vital importance in an age of regression, in a period of the Flood, to preserve for posterity the achievements of the generation about to be swept away: “We, its last representatives, have an obligation to set up a memorial to this disappearing epoch.”¹⁵⁵

In sum, then, it is no exaggeration to say that Dubnov’s life and work were from the very first inextricably intertwined with the mounting tragedy of Russian and then of European Jewry. Dubnov wrote his first articles on history and politics in 1881, was one of the founders of the defense committee in Odessa following the Kishinev pogrom, and lived through and was politically active in the revolutions of 1905 and 1917. He survived the Civil War in St. Petersburg only by the skin of his teeth, witnessed the Nazi rise to power as an exile resident in Berlin, and was killed in Latvia by the German invaders at the end of 1941.¹⁵⁶

Dubnov could have found refuge in America during the interwar period. Overtures were made to him by, among others, the Jewish Theological Seminary.¹⁵⁷ On the face of it, nothing would have been more natural than his joining the great stream of Jews moving West, a movement he himself had predicted and encouraged as early as 1881. But strong family ties worked against such a step; besides, as both historian and ideologist, he felt that his place was in Europe – where the present was organically integrated with the past, the new with the old – rather than in America, which belonged so clearly to the future. As the Nazis extended their hold over Europe, Dubnov made no attempt to escape. “One cannot desert the flock which still remains in Europe . . .,” he wrote to Rawnitzki in 1940. “Providence, it seems, has decreed that I should remain with my brothers in the vale of tears and suffer together with them in the hour of danger.”¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁴ S. Dubnov, ed., *Pinkas ha-medina: o pinkas vaad ha-kehillot ha-rashiyot bi-m[e]dinat lita* (Berlin, 1925).

¹⁵⁵ *Kniga zhizni*, I, vii.

¹⁵⁶ On Dubnov’s last days, see Dubnov-Erich, *Life and Work*, pp. 245–47.

¹⁵⁷ *Kniga zhizni*, III, 14–15. Dubnov noted in his diary on 26 August 1922, “Of course, I shall refuse because it’s not pleasant to be living now in the quiet and wealthy land of the dollar, far from the European volcano.”

¹⁵⁸ In a letter to Y. H. Rawnitzki, dated 20 May 1940 (in S. Rawidowicz, ed., *Sefer Shimon Dubnov* [Jerusalem, 1954], p. 331), he wrote that friends in America had obtained an entry visa to the United States for him. See Dubnov-Erich, *Life and Work*, pp. 237, 239. On Dubnov in Riga, see Y. Maor, “Dubnov be-tekufat Riga,” *He-avar* 8 (1961):26–29; and D. Levin, “Me-riga ha-sovyetit li-[ye]rushalayim-be-daaga (Mikhtavo haaharon shel Shimon Dubnov li-[ye]didav be-erets-yisrael,” *Shvut* 8 (1981): 111–12.

The constant succession of crises not only disrupted his life but also exposed his hard-won and highly integrated world view to ever greater stress and strain. On the one hand, as a historian he was ideally placed to sense, and to warn against, impending disaster. Describing Jewish history over the millennia, he had isolated what he saw as perhaps its central theme – the almost rhythmic pattern of communal construction, of persecution and destruction, of exile and migration, of reconstruction in the lands of refuge, one center always replacing another, albeit at enormous cost.

On the other hand, as an ideologist, he was committed to the cause of political liberation and Jewish emancipation in Russia and indeed in all of Europe. It was of key importance to his entire way of thought that history had taken a radically new turn with the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, that the medieval era, with its endemic violence and intolerance, had been forced to retreat.

But what if no ethical watershed divided the medieval from the modern? What if history forever follows not a linear but a cyclical path? More and more, Dubnov asked himself these questions, and they burst forth in his awesome articles following the pogroms of 1903 and 1905. But here was an intellectual problem which he could never resolve to his own satisfaction.

He discovered reluctantly, painfully, but inexorably that he would have to live out his life as an exile from 1922 on, as a nineteenth-century man in the ever more hostile world of the twentieth century. His belief in measured change, in constitutional liberalism, in humanistic nationalism, in a united Jewish politics, was rendered more anachronistic with every passing year. Of course, he could have escaped political isolation by modifying his ideology. He would have been welcomed by the Zionist, Territorialist, or Bundist movements if he had only been ready to deemphasize one aspect or another of his overarching theory of Jewish nationalism. But for him that would have been a betrayal of the truth.

The only course open to him, he concluded, was to retreat into semi-isolation and do his best to ensure that his historical works, his political message, and his life story be made as accessible as possible. They would be rediscovered by later generations in a different and better time.

Fifty years after his death, from today's perspective – which, of course, is itself only transient – it is impossible not to admire Dubnov's unyielding integrity, however lonely and costly it proved to be. What is more, his faith that time would eventually salvage something from what had every appearance of a lost cause has been justified.

It is clear today that it was Dubnov who, in many important ways, set the agenda for Jewish historiography in the twentieth century. He did so as the disciple of, but also in opposition to, Graetz. Dubnov not only pioneered the systematic study of the Jewish past in Eastern Europe but also, in contrast to Graetz, wrote history which used anthropological rather than theological terms of explanation. Dubnov's historiography emphasized the impact of external sociopolitical factors on the internal life of the Jews; the key importance of sociodemographic change, particularly migration and resettlement; the centrality of the mystic movements in the national experience; and the unbroken political role of Jewish self-government throughout the ages. Thus, for all the criticism to which his work is subject, Dubnov's reputation as a historian will, in all probability, only grow with the passage of time.

As for his political ideology, which condemned Dubnov to marginality for decades, it, too, has weathered better than could have been expected. His conviction that the triumph of totalitarianism would eventually prove transient looks far less naive half a century later than it did in 1940. His analysis of the Jewish future has similarly proved remarkably prescient. Although he underestimated the destructive power of anti-Semitism and the full potential of Zionism, he rightly predicted as early as the turn of the century that Palestine and America were both destined to be the new centers of the Jewish world. And that world, as he insisted it would be, is now multicentered. Within it, his concept of cultural autonomy in the Diaspora, well adapted to modern concepts of ethnicity and ethnic rights, is again surprisingly applicable.

Perhaps the last word should come from Dubnov himself. A note in his diary from 1926 reads: "When I think of my life I am convinced that what is most characteristic is that ever since early youth I have gone *my own way*, deviating neither to right nor left."¹⁵⁹ And in 1892, when disassociating himself from Graetz's judgment on such Jewish "heretics" as Elisha ben Abuya, he wrote,

But does history glorify only those people who, thanks to fortunate conditions, achieved practical success and condemn those who "thought and suffered" but did not achieve it? That can only end up in the theory of "vae victis" [woe to the conquered].¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ *Kniga zhizni*, III, 70.

¹⁶⁰ "Istoriograf evreistva," *Voskhod*, February 1892, p. 62.

Assimilation and the Jews in Nineteenth-Century Europe

Toward a New Historiography?

The life and thought of the Jewish people in nineteenth-century Europe is rarely described today, in accord with the basic concept which dominated the history books until some twenty years ago. True, the process of revision has been anything but dramatic. Among the historians who write on nineteenth-century Jewry there have been no great public disputes over method or content, nothing comparable to the fierce debates engendered by the cliometric studies of American slavery, for example, or by the structuralist and deconstructionist schools in contemporary literary criticism. No revisionist school of historiography has proclaimed its existence in this field; nor, in many, perhaps even most, cases, were the individual historians involved aware (at least initially) of being engaged in a broader revisionist trend.

A major contribution to the change of perspective has undoubtedly been made by a number of American historians. But the re-mapping of modern Jewish history has not been confined to any one country (Israeli historians, too, have been strongly represented) nor to any one generation.

What became the historiographical orthodoxy in this field for a number of decades – in most marked form from the 1930s until the 1960s – had its origins in the Tsarist Empire. In general terms, it was a major by-product of the modern Jewish nationalism which surged up in the Pale of Settlement following the pogroms of 1881–2 and which, despite ebbs and flows, sustained its momentum throughout the reigns of Alexander III and Nicholas II.

Previously published in Jonathan Frankel and Steven J. Zipperstein (eds.), *Assimilation and Community: The Jews in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 1–37.

More specifically, what can be called the Russian-Jewish school of history was, to all intents and purposes, initiated, inspired by one man, Simon M. Dubnov. In an extraordinary burst of energy and creativity during the decade 1888–98, he laid down the basic guidelines for his own work during the rest of his life and for that of mainstream historians over a number of generations.¹

In those years, Dubnov marked himself off from the great German-Jewish historian Heinrich Graetz (even while fully acknowledging his own discipleship). Where Graetz had written history from a theological and metaphysical perspective,² his own point of view would be secular and anthropocentric, taking as its ideal the empiricism of natural science. Where Graetz had seen the religious and national strands of Jewish history as inextricably and eternally intertwined, Dubnov came to regard it as axiomatic that the Jews were primarily a nation and that Judaism, the religion, was a secondary attribute which could be safely transformed, or even abandoned, according to circumstance.

Graetz had concentrated attention largely on intellectual and literary themes; Dubnov now emphasized communal history, the forms of autonomous self-government which had sustained the Jewish people through the millennia of exile. (And, of course, he linked this thesis to his own political ideology which demanded Jewish national self-government, autonomy within multinational and democratized states.)³ Or, to take yet another divergence, where Graetz had been critical of all forms of Jewish mysticism, Dubnov now wrote his remarkable history of Hasidism, which described the movement as a socio-psychological response to mass distress, thus justifying it (at least during its period of genesis) in populist terms.⁴

Many factors combined to entrench and bring about the diffusion of the historiographical school which, although launched by Dubnov, soon took on a vigorous life of its own. With its stress on national politics,

¹ For a full list of Dubnov's publications, see his *Kniga zhizni*, vol. III (New York, 1957), pp. 163–89.

² On Graetz's philosophy of history: H. Graetz, *The Structure of Jewish History and Other Essays*, edited and introduced by I. Schorsch (New York, 1975).

³ See, particularly, S. M. Dubnov, *Pisma o starom i novom evreistve (1897–1907)* (St Petersburg, 1907). For an abbreviated English edition: S. M. Dubnov, *Nationalism and History: Essays on Old and New Judaism*, edited and introduced by K. S. Pinson (Philadelphia, 1958).

⁴ Dubnov's history of Hasidism was first published in the monthly *Voskhod* during the years 1888 to 1892. A Hebrew edition, *Toldot hehasidut betkufat zmiḥatah vegidulah* was published in three volumes in Tel Aviv, 1930–1.

avowed secularism and the search for scientific certainty, it gave voice to, reinforced and in turn was sustained by the radicalism of the Russian-Jewish intelligentsia in the late Tsarist period. This mode of history could appeal to Zionists, Territorialists, Bundists and Folkists alike, for even though their respective movements were bitterly divided over issues of means and ends, they shared a common faith in the triumphant power of modern nationalism.

By 1914, the increasing interest in Jewish history (above all Russian and Polish) had led to the establishment of a high-quality journal (*Evreiskaia Starina*);⁵ of higher educational courses (the so-called Oriental Studies organized under the auspices of Baron David Gintsburg);⁶ and of the Historical-Ethnographical Society (in which S. An-sky played so conspicuous a role).⁷ The monumental sixteen-volume encyclopedia (*Evreiskaia entsiklopediia*)⁸ and the first part of Dubnov's *History of the Jews in Modern Times* had already been published.⁹ Increasingly, contemporary political issues were linked in the Hebrew, Yiddish and Russian-language (Jewish) press in the Tsarist Empire, as well as in Palestine and America, to discussions of possible parallels, precedents and cautionary tales to be found in the national past.¹⁰

Again, many of the leading scholars of the next generation had by then been drawn into the field of modern Jewish history: B. Z. Dinaburg (Dinur), Z. Rubashev (Shazar), Elyohu Cherikover, Avrom Menes, to name just a few. And some of these, then still very young *intelligently* would, in turn, exert a powerful influence on contemporaries, future historians, in Central Europe – the most famous example being, of course,

⁵ *Evreiskaia Starina: trekhmesiachnik Evreiskogo istorikoetnograficheskogo obshchestva* (St Petersburg/Leningrad, 1909–30).

⁶ On Baron David Gintsburg, in general, and the Courses in Oriental Studies in particular, see *He'avar* 4 (1958), 77–165. (Among the essays published there note Zalman Shazar, 'Raboteinu beveit midrasho shel baron Ginzburg (5666–5672)', *ibid.*, pp. 88–100.)

⁷ I.e., the *Evreiskoe istoriko-etnograficheskoe obshchestvo* founded in St Petersburg in 1908.

⁸ The *Evreiskaia entsiklopediia* was published in St Petersburg, 1906–13.

⁹ S. M. Dubnov, *Noveishaia istoriia evreiskogo naroda* (St Petersburg, 1914).

¹⁰ See e.g. S. Almog, *Zionism and History: The Rise of a New Jewish Consciousness* (Jerusalem, 1987), particularly pp. 23–83; and J. Frankel, 'The "Yizkor" Book of 1911: a Note on National Myths in the Second Aliya', in H. Ben Israel, A. Goren, O. Handlin, M. Heyd, G. Mosse and M. Zimmerman, (eds.), *Religion, Ideology and Nationalism in Europe and America: Essays Presented in Honor of Yehoshua Arieli* (Jerusalem, 1986), pp. 355–84.

Gershom Scholem, who like many other German Zionists of his generation looked eastward for inspiration in his search for an authentic, uncompromised form of Jewish life. (Scholem himself would later note that in his circles 'there was something like a cult of Eastern Jews'.)¹¹

In the interwar years, with the decline and eventual elimination of Jewish scholarship in the Soviet Union, the historiographical enterprise initiated in Tsarist times was able to re-root itself elsewhere. Two institutions in particular now developed as the central foci in this effort of reconstruction and renewal: the YIVO Institute (or Jewish Scientific Organization) in Vilna which established branches in Warsaw, Berlin and New York, and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem – both founded in the same year, 1925. It was during the 1920s, too, that Dubnov, who was closely associated with YIVO, first published his ten-volume *Weltgeschichte des Jüdischen Volkes* which was very widely read (a Russian edition came out in Latvia in the 1930s)¹² and which, with its clear nationalist message, exerted increasing influence in the wake of the Nazi triumph in Germany.¹³

With the destruction of the Jews in Europe during the Second World War, the Hebrew University found itself almost the sole heir to the Russian (or by now, more exactly, Eastern European) school of modern Jewish historiography. YIVO survived in New York, the depository of a major library and archive, much of it salvaged from postwar Europe, but its research staff was very limited in size. And yet the rapid growth of the Hebrew University following the establishment of Israel in 1948, and the expansion of Jewish studies in the new state generally, meant that the tradition of historical scholarship leading back to Dubnov was able not only to sustain itself, but was also revitalized to a remarkable extent, carried forward by new academic journals, specialized monographs and major works of synthesis.

It is a remarkable fact that all the major books which seek to analyse the history of the Jews across the entire expanse of the modern world belong within that tradition. Nearly all of them have long been available in English translation: the final volumes of Dubnov's *History of the Jewish*

¹¹ G. Scholem, *From Berlin to Jerusalem: Memories of My Youth* (New York, 1988), p. 44.

¹² *Weltgeschichte des Jüdischen Volkes*, 10 vols. (Berlin, 1925–9); *Vsemirnaia istoriia evreiskogo naroda*, 10 vols. (Riga, 1936–9).

¹³ E.g. Dubnov, *Kniga zhizni*, vol. III, p. 120.

People;¹⁴ Raphael Mahler's *A History of Modern Jewry*¹⁵ (which, despite initial aims to the contrary, covers only a limited period) and Shmuel Ettinger's section in the Harvard *History of the Jews*.¹⁶ To this list can be added Ben-Zion Dinur's collected essays (still not translated) in the volume *Bemifneh hadorot*.¹⁷ These works have by now all attained classic status: they are painted on a vast canvas, based on extraordinary erudition and informed with impassioned concern.

Each of these historians, of course, had his own very distinctive viewpoint, method and style. Both Ben-Zion Dinur, for example, who was committed to a thoroughgoing Zionist ideology (including the concept of the 'negation of the Exile' – *shlilat hagalat*) and Raphael Mahler, with his Marxist version of Zionism, were inevitably in profound disagreement on key issues with Dubnov, the Diaspora nationalist, autonomist and bitter opponent of class-war ideology. And, none the less, beyond all these very real distinctions they shared with each other and with the mainstream historians at large, a number of basic perceptions which resulted, ultimately, from one overarching concept.

As they saw it, modern Jewish history was best understood in essentially dichotomous terms. Bipolarity served as the key, the paradigmatic principle which supplied these works with their underlying structure. On the one hand, there was the Jewish nation which had tenaciously survived almost two millennia of exile and dispersion by dint of its internal solidarity, faith and inventiveness. On the other, there were the combined forces of change which, unless creatively absorbed and organically integrated by the nation, could only set in motion a process of inexorable erosion and a process of self-destruction.

Ultimately, in the era after 1881, this existential collision would (in this view of things) be transformed by the emergence of the new nationalist movements which had found the way to combine tradition and modernity in a new, a viable, synthesis. The national ideologies did not undermine but rather reinforced the unity of the Jewish people. The clash between the centrifugal and the centripetal forces, between disintegration

¹⁴ Dubnov, *History of the Jews*, vols. IV–V (New York, 1971–3).

¹⁵ R. Mahler, *A History of Modern Jewry 1780–1815* (London, 1971). See, too, R. Mahler, *Divrei yisrael: dorot aharonim*, 7 vols. (Merhaviah/Tel Aviv, 1961–80).

¹⁶ S. Ettinger, 'The Modern Period', in H. H. Ben-Sasson (ed.), *A History of the Jewish People* (Cambridge, Mass., 1976), pp. 725–1,096.

¹⁷ B.-Z. Dinur, *Bemifneh hadorot: meḥkarim veiyunim bereshitam shel hazmanim beḥadashim betoldot yisrael* (Jerusalem, 1972).

and solidarity, between assimilation and community remained no less fundamental, but henceforward the scales would no longer be as heavily weighted against the group survival of the Jews.

In his analysis of modern European history, Dubnov developed the theory that during the periods of governmental liberalism and of a more open society the danger of national disintegration increased; while conversely reaction and resurgent Judeophobia acted to revitalize Jewish group solidarity:

The internal processes of *assimilation*, on the one hand, and of *national consciousness* on the other, are closely tied to the external processes of emancipation and of reaction. The term 'assimilation' can be used to describe both the way in which either Jews are swept along, unconsciously as it were, into the current of the surrounding culture and also the way in which Jews consciously renounce their national identity – with the exception of the religious dimension – and come to include themselves in any given country as members of the dominant nation.¹⁸

Both Raphael Mahler and Shmuel Ettinger accepted the logic of this reasoning. Mahler placed particular emphasis on 1848. The revolutions of that year, he maintained, 'which for the world as a whole spelled progress, did not bring a Jewish rebirth, but on the contrary heralded a period of national disintegration and assimilation'.¹⁹ And although Ettinger preferred to be less specific in dating the dynamics of assimilation he, too, could argue that,

On the one hand, we find the centripetal force drawing individual Jews and various groups within the people to identify themselves with the Jewish past and with all Jews throughout the Diaspora, and on the other hand we see the centrifugal tendency pulling them apart and bringing them closer to their alien surroundings. . . . There were periods, particularly in the second half of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth century, when the centrifugal forces predominated. But the spread of modern antisemitism and the Nazi Holocaust led to a radical change.²⁰

For his part, Ben-Zion Dinur likewise interpreted the modern history of the Jews in terms of challenge and response, disintegration and

¹⁸ Dubnov, *Noveishaia istoriia evreiskogo naroda*, vol. I (also counted as vol. VIII of the *Vsemirnaia istoriia*) (Riga, 1937), p. 57 (English edition: p. 496.) (This and subsequent translations from Dubnov's *World History* are my own, made directly from the Russian edition.)

¹⁹ Mahler, *A History of Modern Jewry*, p. ii. ²⁰ Ettinger, 'The Modern Period', p. 731.

reintegration, although it should be noted that he specifically disassociated himself from Dubnov's concept of an almost regular ebb and flow:

The feeling which was of such vital importance for all generations past – that the Jews constitute one people – now in modern times simply, as it were, evaporated. That uniform way of life which had made a Jew feel comfortable anywhere in the world from the moment that he set foot in a Jewish home was severely undermined, and in some countries it was reduced to little more than a memory from the lost past. The cultural co-operation which had linked the various communities had to all appearances come to a stop. . . . The Hebrew which had acted as the cultural language of the united nation . . . had ceased to fulfil that function in most Jewish communities. . . . And it is erroneous to associate these developments with specific periods of modern history, with particular periods of assimilation, of self negation. Rather, these phenomena represent permanent processes at work in all recent generations.²¹

The bipolar concept which was of such central importance here, then, in many ways served the historian well. It had a very strong emotive and political appeal; and as such it undoubtedly provided him with a source of inspiration, of energy. But, no less significantly, it acted as a compass, permitting him to orient himself in the vast and infinitely complex expanses of modern Jewish history. It made it possible to produce a coherent map of an otherwise all but incomprehensible terrain, to create order out of chaos.

However, at the same time, this concept encouraged the tendency to focus the spotlight on the extremes, thus leaving the middle ground, although certainly not out of sight, still in the shadows. And, likewise, it brought with it a view of the fundamental conflict as ultimately a clash of opposing beliefs, ideologies, ideals. Even Mahler concentrated attention primarily on ideology, even though as a Marxist he insisted that this dimension of history was the by-product of warring class interests.

It is above all, perhaps, in his analysis of two major themes in the development of the Jewish people during the nineteenth century (or, more accurately, during the hundred years from 1780 to 1880) – enlightenment and emancipation – that the historian first finds himself confronted by the clash between tradition and modernity. For the members of the nationalist school of history, this was no simple challenge, and the result was often paradoxical. As secular Jews, dedicated to the cause of critical scholarship, and no less as committed liberals or socialists they were obviously committed to the side of 'progress' against that of 'reaction'. But as nationalists analysing an era when tradition was in almost constant

²¹ Dinur, *Bemifneh hadorot*, pp. 31–2.

disarray and Jewish nationalism had as yet hardly emerged, they were pulled in exactly the opposite direction. If change spelled the end of community, or group survival, then even continued immobility was, in the last resort, to be preferred.

As a result, the Jewish Enlightenment movement – or Haskalah – was depicted in the classic works as positive in its original intentions but as profoundly flawed in its subsequent development. In so far and as long as the Haskalah movement, for example, employed Hebrew as its primary means of communication and even sought to bring about a literary renaissance in that language, it was seen as clearly acting within the communal, the national, framework. It represented a genuine attempt to combine the ancient and the modern in a new synthesis.

However, to the extent that the movement encouraged the replacement of Yiddish as the spoken, and Hebrew as the literary, language of the Jewish people by German (or whatever the official language was in any given state), it was treated in highly critical terms.

The linguistic issue was one of a number of the factors which combined to reduce sharply the status of Moses Mendelssohn, the dominant and founding figure in the German Haskalah movement. In the pre-nationalist era (or more specifically, until the publication of Peretz Smolenskin's attacks on the 'Berlin Haskalah' in such essays as his 'Am Olam' of 1872),²² Mendelssohn had been almost universally admired within modernized Jewish circles ranging from that of neo-Orthodoxy led by Samson Raphael Hirsch to that of extreme Reform. He had combined (such had been the perception) all that was best in European and in Jewish culture, displaying absolute loyalty both to humanity and to the Jewish people, to the universal and to the particular.²³

Dubnov, himself, in the early 1880s, before his conversion to the nationalist ideology, had still shared this view of Mendelssohn as the all but mythical figure, proud and harmonious, who had demonstrated to the Jews in the modern world how best to combine the old and the new.²⁴ But in his *History*, Dubnov, while acknowledging, *inter alia*, that Mendelssohn had been able to 'preserve an organic bond with his people

²² P. Smolenskin, 'Am olam', *Hashar* 3 (1872), 3–16, 73–84, 145–52, 201–8, 377–84, 433–40, 505–12, 553–66, 643–50, 659–84.

²³ E.g. Ben Uziel (S. R. Hirsch), *Igrot Zafon: Neunzehn Briefe über Judenthum* (Altona, N.Y. 1836), p. 93; H. Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, vol. XI (Leipzig, 1900), pp. 1–92.

²⁴ E.g. Dubnov, 'Mendelson russkikh evreev: ocherk zhizni i deiatelnosti I.B. Lebnzona', *Razsvet* 30 (24 July 1881), 1, 192.

whom he was anxious to enlighten and humanize',²⁵ was in many ways highly critical. In particular, he saw in Mendelssohn's translation of the Bible into German a major causal link in a process which was bound eventually to undermine the very foundations of the community. By the early nineteenth century, he wrote:

The number of Jews drawn into the process of assimilation was already most significant and was growing year by year. One of the signs of this process was the fact that the German and French Jews in Alsace had repudiated their own national [*narodnyi*] language, encouraged by the propaganda which had been conducted by the Mendelssohnian school ever since the translation of the Bible into German. The state language found its way into every sphere of the people's life, into the family and the school, into literature and even into the synagogue. The new generations steadily alienated themselves from Jewry: first the generation of Henrietta Herz, of Mendelssohn's daughters . . . ; and then that of Börne and Heine, Marx and Lassalle – such were the stages of the cultural Reformation.²⁶

On the subject of Yiddish, Raphael Mahler was if anything even sharper, although he was ready enough to acknowledge that Mendelssohn (among other things, one of the founders of the Enlightenment journal, *Hameasef*) had sought to raise the level of Hebrew as a classical language. But, as he saw it,

[Mendelssohn's] contempt for the spoken language of the people expressed the view of the new Jewish middle class, its hope of resembling the country's ruling classes in all things. . . . Neither he nor any of the other *maskilim* . . . realized that by jettisoning Yiddish, they were destroying one of the chief foundations of a distinct Jewish culture.²⁷

The extremely rapid transition made by the Jews in Central Europe from Yiddish and Hebrew to German was to be regarded, then, as only one among many symptoms of a profound malaise. The Berlin Haskalah had proved itself incapable of mustering the spiritual forces required to assure Jewish group survival in the modern age. It was thus no wonder that nearly all Mendelssohn's children converted to Christianity or that the Berlin community was hit by a veritable 'plague' of baptism by the end of the eighteenth century. The ultimate act of self-degradation (always strongly emphasized in mainstream historiography) was the notorious suggestion made in 1799 by David Friedländer, one of the community's

²⁵ Dubnov, *Istoriia evreev v evrope*, vol. IV (also counted as vol. VIII of the *Vsemirnaia istoriia*), p. 294 (English edition: vol. IV, p. 336).

²⁶ Dubnov, *Noveishaia istoriia*, vol. I (*Vsemirnaia istoriia*, vol. VIII), p. 59 (English edition: vol. IV, p. 498).

²⁷ Mahler, *A History of Modern Jewry*, p. 162.

most prominent leaders and an associate of Mendelssohn's in the 1780s, that the Berlin Jews should consider entering the church *en masse* (albeit freed from the obligation to recognize some of the more supernatural articles of the Christian faith).²⁸

In contrast to the Berlin Haskalah, the *maskilim* in Galicia and in the Tsarist Empire retained the use of Hebrew (and even, at times, of Yiddish) in many of the journals, newspapers and books (both scholarly and literary) which they published throughout the prenationalist era ending in 1881, and beyond. This fact was, of course, fully recognized by the historians of the national school, but none the less the Haskalah movement in the Habsburg and Romanov Empires was also subjected to critical scrutiny. It was perceived as lacking roots in its own ancient soil. 'The Haskalah influences that infiltrated East European Jewry', as Shmuel Ettinger put it, 'came from the cultural centres of the West, and above all from Berlin'.²⁹

As an isolated group of would-be reformers, the *maskilim* frequently found themselves forced to seek an alliance of one type or another with the autocratic regimes in Vienna or St Petersburg. The readiness to look for support from this source of power could only be described in negative terms by historians who perceived the Austrian and Russian despotisms as fundamentally hostile to the interests, and ultimately even to the survival, of the Jewish communities in their countries (the only major exception to this rule being the government of Alexander II in his early years).

Thus Dubnov was scathing in his description of the *maskilim* who cooperated with Joseph II in an attempt to impose a state school system on his Jewish subjects. The Emperor, he wrote, sought to impose his experiments on 'the Jews of Galicia whom he undertook to "correct" by harsh police measures [aided by the *maskil*]. . . . Homberg whose task it was to execute the "policy"'.³⁰ Mahler noted that the 'Galician Jews adopted innumerable schemes to evade the decrees of "dictated enlightenment"',³¹ and that the net effect of the support offered to Joseph II by the *maskilim* was to 'precipitate a conflict between Haskalah and ultra-Orthodoxy that raged throughout the nineteenth century'.³² And Ettinger described the policies of Nicholas I and the response of the Jews in very similar terms:

²⁸ E.g., Dubnov, *Noveishaia istoriia*, vol. 1 (VIII), pp. 159–61 (English edition: vol. IV, 595–7). Mahler, *A History of Modern Jewry*, pp. 207–9.

²⁹ Ettinger, 'The Modern Period', p. 841.

³⁰ Dubnov, *Istoriia evreev v evrope*, vol. IV (VIII), p. 297 (English edition: vol. IV, p. 339).

³¹ Mahler, *A History of Modern Jewry*, p. 338.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 166.

‘Various *maskilim* suggested to him [Uvarov, the Minister of Education] that he introduce these changes by coercive methods.’ However,

the authorities did not have Jewish interests at heart but intended rather to manipulate the beliefs and concepts of the Jews and even to induce them to convert. . . . [And] the Jews protected themselves by every means at their disposal.³³

The result was to arouse ‘doubts in the Jewish mind regarding the loyalty of the *maskilim* to their people’.³⁴

Surveying the Haskalah as a whole, Shmuel Ettinger saw it as a transitional movement which had understood what was perhaps the basic issue facing the Jews in the modern world – ‘how to preserve their Jewish identity within . . . a society that was abolishing corporative frameworks’³⁵ – but had failed to resolve it: ‘The *maskilim* were the first to seek solutions to this problem, and although they did not achieve their aim, they induced Jewish society to seek out new ways for itself.’³⁶

The subject of Jewish emancipation brought with it, if anything, even greater problems for the nationalist historian than that of the Haskalah. After all, the cause of equality before the law, full civil and political rights for the Jews, was one which made not only a rational but also a profoundly emotional appeal to Dubnov and those who followed him. Indeed, Dubnov and Dinur had both actively participated in the Russian revolution of 1905 which they had seen as aimed at liberty for all, regardless of nationality or religion. Their commitment to the cause of liberation, of emancipation, was absolute.

However, here again the same paradox was at work. The greater the liberty, equality and fraternity, the more powerful would become the centrifugal forces threatening the survival of the Jewish people – everywhere a small and scattered minority – at least until counterbalanced by new forms of national education, consciousness, autonomy, sovereignty. As already noted, Dubnov even saw in this logic a basic law governing the rhythm of modern Jewish history. The outcome tended to be that the historians described in detail and in highly positive terms the process of Jewish emancipation; and yet, at the same time, focused attention on the extremely negative impact which that process could exert on the will and ability of the Jews to survive as a collectivity in the modern era.

If Berlin dominated the historiography of the Haskalah, it was Paris which came to represent, to symbolize, the dangers inherent in the politics

³³ Ettinger, ‘The Modern Period’, pp. 817–18.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 842.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 788.

³⁶ Ibid.

of liberation. In fact, Dubnov saw German thought and French political radicalism as the joint cause of crisis. Or, as he put it: 'The epoch of Mendelssohn and of the French Revolution developed in the upper strata of Jewish society a tremendous centrifugal force.'³⁷

Two chapters above all in the story of the revolutionary period came to illustrate this theme. First, there was the long-drawn-out struggle, which lasted some two years, until the National Assembly finally decided in September 1791 to grant the Jews of France equal rights. From the many speeches delivered on this controversial subject in the Assembly, one in particular has been assigned special significance by the historiographical tradition: the statement made in December 1789 by Clermont-Tonnerre in support of Jewish emancipation:

Everything must be refused to the Jews as a nation; everything must be granted to them as individuals. Each of them should individually be a citizen. But it is claimed that they do not want this. Very well, let them say so and they will have to be expelled. . . . There cannot be a nation within a nation.³⁸

As Dubnov understood it, here was the key message, the unwritten contract, which made the grant of civil rights acceptable to the French state. 'The Jews', he wrote, 'were granted equality in civil rights on the assumption that in the given country they constituted not a national, but only a religious, group within the ruling nation.'³⁹ Shmuel Ettinger summed up the debate of the years 1789 to 1791 in similar terms:

Their opponents claimed that the Jews were a separate nation and not only a religious entity and, therefore, unable to claim any political rights. Their supporters, on the other hand, agreed to accept them into society as individuals who would be expected, to a greater or lesser extent, to disavow their heritage.⁴⁰

Second, particular attention was likewise concentrated on the Assembly of Jewish Notables and the Sanhedrin brought together respectively in the years 1806 and 1807 by Napoleon in Paris. It was there and then that the leadership of the Jewish people in France (and in French-controlled Europe) was called upon to pay the belated price, as it were, for the civil equality ceded in 1791. Several declarations made by the Jewish representatives have been considered particularly humiliating, among them the statement that 'their religion commands them [the Jews] to regard the law

³⁷ Dubnov, *Noveishaia istoriia*, vol. 1 (VIII), p. 57 (English edition: vol. IV, p. 497).

³⁸ Mahler, *A History of Modern Jewry*, pp. 32, 744; Ettinger, 'The Modern Period', p. 744; Dubnov, *Noveishaia istoriia*, vol. 1 (VIII), p. 74 (English edition: vol. IV, pp. 513–14).

³⁹ Ibid., p. 58 (English edition: vol. IV, p. 497).

⁴⁰ Ettinger, 'The Modern Period', p. 749.

of the land in all civil and political questions as the law of Israel'; and, still worse, the assurance given that 'today . . . the Jews no longer constitute a nation and have been privileged to be included in this great [French] nation'.⁴¹

Of this latter and similar resolutions Dubnov wrote:

Taking its stand from the first on the slippery slope of concession and utility the Assembly fell even further. And when the issue arose of the relationship between civil patriotism and Jewish national sentiment, . . . the servility of the Assembly knew no bounds. . . . With apparent light-heartedness (although in all probability it cost the better delegates a real inner struggle), [it] renounced all pretensions to broad communal self-government.⁴²

And for his part, Mahler was more scathing still, seeing here the joint effort of a counter-revolutionary despotism and of the established Jewish bourgeoisie. The assertion that the Jews had ceased to be a nation was, as he put it, 'an undisguised betrayal of the unity, dreams and historic efforts of the Jewish people'.⁴³

Interpreted along these lines, enlightenment and emancipation, Berlin and Paris, had combined to set their stamp on the history of the Jewish people in the century which separated Mendelssohn from the proto-Zionism of Pinsker. They set in motion the dynamics of change which were to predominate until 1881. The result (as seen by the mainstream historiography) was a fundamental metamorphosis – an ever-widening gulf which came to mark off the Jews of Western Europe from the Jews of Eastern Europe. It was in the light of this process that the historians surveyed the unfolding of events over the entire continent for the best part of the century. The division between West and East became an explanatory key of central importance.

Here, too, ideological polarization served as a main theme. At one extreme stood the religious reform movement which first emerged in Germany during the late Napoleonic years but only developed a clearly defined theology and philosophy of history in the 1840s. And at the other, primarily in the Pale of Settlement, Congress Poland and Galicia, stood the world of traditional Judaism, still devoted to age-old religious practice and still ruled by deep loyalty to the Jewish nation.

Reform Judaism which, once entrenched as a major force in Germany, spread to the United States, Hungary and to a number of countries in Western Europe, was understood to be the archetypal product of the

⁴¹ Mahler, *A History of Modern Jewry*, p. 65.

⁴² Dubnov, *Noveishaia istoriia*, vol. 1, (VIII), pp. 115–16 (English edition: vol. IV, pp. 552–3).

⁴³ Mahler, *A History of Modern Jewry*, p. 66.

Haskalah and of the emancipation process combined. From the Enlightenment movement it took its extreme rationalism and naive universalism. And it was the fierce political struggle to obtain equal rights in Prussia and the lesser German states in the decade leading up to 1848 which had propelled the movement to undertake nothing less than a root-and-branch reformation of its theology. In order to prove the absolute loyalty of the Jews to state and country they were ready to remove from the prayer-books any reference to the age-old hope for a return to the ancient homeland in Palestine and to interpret the dispersion of the Jews across the world not as Exile but as of positive value, as the way for the Jews to carry the message of monotheistic ethics to all of mankind, as a divinely ordained mission. Thus, the Reform movement made it possible to claim that the Jews constituted a strictly religious community divested of all national attributes, that they were Germans (or Poles or Frenchmen, as the case might be) of the 'Mosaic persuasion'.

In this way, reformed Judaism became the symbol, as it were, of a readiness to trade in age-old beliefs in exchange for civil equality and social acceptance. Writing of Abraham Geiger, one of the founding fathers of the movement (as well as of Samson Raphael Hirsch who, although neo-Orthodox, likewise stressed the strictly religious nature of the Jewish people), Dubnov argued that he had erred in denying

the idea of the eternal [Jewish] *nation*. . . . Geiger and Hirsch negated the Jewish people [*evreistvo*] as a national *individuum* and defined it as only a religious entity. In so doing, they reconciled themselves to *national* assimilation which, in the final resort, is bound to lead to the total dissolution of the Jews among the other nations – to the disappearance of that vital organism which sustains Judaism.⁴⁴

The remark, by now much quoted, made by Geiger in a letter to Derenbourg in 1840 during the affair of the Damascus blood libel could be seen as typical. 'It is quite honourable', he then wrote, 'that eminent people are manifesting solidarity with their persecuted brethren, but . . . in my eyes it is more important that Jews in Prussia should be allowed to become pharmacists or lawyers than that Jews in Asia or Africa be rescued'.⁴⁵

In contrast to the essential pusillanimity thus exemplified by the Reform movement was the stubborn refusal of the traditional Jews to desert their own way of life. Mahler could, for example, describe the struggle for the soul of Hungarian Jewry set in motion by the reforming theories of Aaron

⁴⁴ Dubnov, *Noveishaia istoriia*, vol. II (IX), p. 68 (English edition: vol. v, p. 82).

⁴⁵ 'Abraham Geigers Briefe an J. Derenbourg', (ed. L. Geiger), *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, 24 (12 June 1896), 284. (For references to this letter: e.g. Dinur, *Bemifnehabdorot*, p. 31; Ettinger, 'The Modern Period', p. 848.)

Chorin in the 1820s as 'a conflict that was to continue for several decades between the Orthodox and the Enlightened Hungarian Jews – between religious conservatism and national Jewish loyalty, on the one hand, and assimilation, on the other'.⁴⁶

The two modes of Jewish life, however, were seen as divided not only by ideological and geographical but also by sociological factors. There was a major strand of populism in the thinking of Dubnov which was shared in large part by his students and successors; while, for his part, Mahler translated the general concepts of the 'people' or the 'masses', as opposed to the social elites, into specifically class terms. In his interpretation, the economic interests of the German-Jewish bourgeoisie lay at the root of its active 'assimilationism' and its antinational Judaism. (In so far as the Italian or American Jewish middle class did not feel pressured similarly by state and society to prove its loyalty demonstratively, it could therefore remain 'undisturbed in its loyalty to the Jewish people's historical goal'.)⁴⁷ However, it was Dinur, perhaps, who provided the sharpest formulation of a Jewish world divided in two:

between, on the one side, a Jewish world conscious of its own worth and, on the other, a form of Jewish existence characterized by self-negation; between on the one side the maximal degree of Jewishness possible in the Diaspora – with a mass population of Jews closely concentrated together in townlets, towns and metropolitan centres and united by a common way of life, by self-consciousness and confidence in their own world; and on the other, a minimal degree of Jewishness; small numbers; a diffused minority with no clearly distinct way of life; highly self-effacing and ready to make do with only the very vaguest traces of the ancestral heritage.⁴⁸

Broadly speaking, Dinur concluded, this division was that dividing the Eastern European Jews from the Western Jews.⁴⁹

Of course, Dinur hastened to qualify this statement. Things were in reality by no means as neat. In so far as the dichotomy was partially rooted in socio-economic factors, the 'Western' pattern was carried eastward by the spread of capitalism and modern enterprise. And, conversely, the 'Eastern' way of life was carried to the West by the massive emigration in the latter years of the nineteenth century. The two worlds were profoundly alienated from each other but none the less increasingly came into contact and interacted. What is more, Dinur by no means neglected the fact that from the 1830s onwards, at least, the communities in the West displayed

⁴⁶ Mahler, *A History of Modern Jewry*, p. 278.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. xxii.

⁴⁸ Dinur, *Bemifneh hadorot*, p. 50.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

a marked measure of political activism in defence of their own group interests and those of the Jewish people at large. He noted the systematic campaigns mounted in Prussia and England, for example, to win equal rights. And he described the way in which the representative Jewish bodies in England and France developed interventionist policies on behalf of communities in many parts of the world during their moments of crisis and danger – a mode of political behaviour which culminated in 1860 in the foundation of the Alliance Israélite Universelle.

His analysis of the factors which made possible political action of this type was detailed and most convincing. He emphasized the key role played by the growth of a modern Jewish press in many countries; by the increased self-confidence of the *haute bourgeoisie*; and by the emergence of an influential stratum of writers, journalists and politicians (Heine, Börne, Riesser, Crémieux) whose experience in the world at large could be harnessed at times to defend specifically Jewish interests.⁵⁰

Dinur was certainly no exception here: the politics of Western Jewry in the era of emancipation was assigned an honourable place by the mainstream historiography.⁵¹ The problem, though, was how to explain the underlying motivation which had produced and sustained this phenomenon in the first place. After all, as defined by Dinur himself, the period from 1789 to 1881 was primarily – and here the Jews of the West had set the pattern – the era of ‘national disintegration and religious adaptation’.⁵² Given this overriding trend, the emergence of Jewish political activism in the West in the middle decades of the century presented the historian with something of an anomaly.

In consequence, the politics of this type, and at that time, was generally treated as the exception which proved the rule. It was explained partly as a residual traditionalism, as the persistent survival – despite, and in opposition to – modernity of age-old modes of response; as ‘intercessionism’ of one kind or another (*shtadlanut*, perhaps, or *pidyon shvuim* – the ransom of prisoners). But the assertion of world-wide Jewish solidarity was also attributed at times, paradoxically, to the very assimilationism which it seemed so crassly to deny. (‘It is possible’, suggested Shmuel Ettinger, for example, ‘that... the concern of the Jews of Central and Western Europe... emanated from their realisation that as long as the

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 37–46, 55–62.

⁵¹ E.g. Ettinger, ‘The Modern Period’, pp. 847–52.

⁵² Dinur, *Bemifneh hadorot*, p. 64.

“Jewish question” existed even in some remote location they could not be sure of their own total integration.’)⁵³

Finally, the Western model of Jewish politics was seen, too, as a hesitant and tentative reassertion of the group spirit, as a centripetal force, which was best to be understood as an early, inchoate and still not conscious anticipation of modern nationalism. ‘Here was the beginning’, wrote Dubnov of the response to the Damascus case of 1840, ‘of future attempts to consolidate Jewry – at first for philanthropical, cultural and political mutual aid, but later on an avowedly national basis’.⁵⁴ (However, he none the less insisted that the Jews of the West in the 1840s were still strongly opposed to the few overtly proto-Zionist plans published at the time ‘anonymously’, by authors who feared ‘being dubbed utopians’. ‘The assimilated leaders of Western Jewry’, he concluded, ‘distanced themselves from this national idea.’)⁵⁵

When viewed retroactively, it is possible to discern a clear contrast between the historiographical tradition which leads back to Dubnov and the kind of historical studies which have become characteristic in recent decades. It is not that one overarching architectonic paradigm has replaced another. On the contrary, the changing perceptions and methods have resulted in a process of fragmentation. If a powerfully reductionist force acted to give shape and direction to the classic works, the contemporary mood is antireductionist.

The historical process is thus perceived in terms not of bipolarity but of multiplicity. Instead of the one basic conflict between centrifugality and centripetality, now a great variety of autonomous processes, independent variables, are traced as they interact in constantly new permutations. It is as if in this sphere, too, Newton’s fixed laws of physics had been undermined and replaced by the apparently random unpredictability of quantum mechanics. Or, in other words, the focus has shifted from the extremes, from the dichotomous archetypes, to that middle ground where it is no easy task to distinguish the exceptions from the rules.

There are, no doubt, many factors which have combined to bring about this changing intellectual climate and it is certainly far too early to enumerate – let alone evaluate – them in any but the most tentative terms. But it is clear enough that the decline in the bitter dispute between the Jewish

⁵³ Ettinger, ‘The Modern Period’, p. 848.

⁵⁴ Dubnov, *Noveishaia istoriia*, vol. II (IX), p. 241 (English edition: vol. V, p. 250).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 242–3. (English edition: vol. V: pp. 251–2).

nationalists and the antinationalists (or 'assimilationists' as their opponents termed them) has been of key importance. The Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel were developments of such momentous, indeed incredible, proportions that together they brought an abrupt halt to this conflict that had divided the Jewish world against itself in the years from 1881 to 1939. It was a powerful and exclusive ideological commitment which had inspired Dubnov and his successors and provided their work with its imposing structure. They were historians *engagés*.

With the schism between the nationalists and their opponents becoming a thing of the past, Jewish historiography was bound to turn in new directions – and this was doubly true given the fact that Europe and the Americas since 1945 have proved to be relatively free of violence, thus encouraging if not an actual 'end of ideology', then at least more latitudinarian attitudes not only in the present but also towards the past. As a result, the way was open for a wide variety of institutional and methodological factors to assert or reassert themselves.

Thus it is possible, for example, to perceive a resurgence, particularly in the United States of the traditions of German-Jewish scholarship. The Hebrew Union College of the Reform, and the Jewish Theological Seminary of the Conservative, movements which in varying degrees were both modelled on and influenced by similar institutions established in nineteenth-century Germany, now invested much greater efforts in the teaching and research of modern history. At the same time, German-Jewish scholars, such as Alexander Altmann and Nahum Glatzer, who had emigrated from Nazi Germany, took up teaching positions at American universities; from among their students came many future scholars. And the Leo Baeck Institute established in both New York and London after the Second World War gradually built up a major reputation as a research centre through its many high-quality publications on German Jewry.⁵⁶

Of course, German-Jewish historiography was no more all of a piece than that of Eastern Europe. Mention, for example, has already been made of Gershom Scholem's affinity for the world-outlook of the Russian Zionists, the *Ostjuden*, which went together with his antipathy for the attitudes exemplified, as he saw it, in the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*

⁵⁶ The Leo Baeck Institute of Jews from Germany, founded in 1954 (with branches in New York, London and Jerusalem) has published a very large list of scholarly books and brings out periodical publications, notably the *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* and the *Bulletin für die Mitglieder der Gesellschaft der Freunde des Leo Baeck Instituts*.

(although, as David Biale has pointed out, his own work in many ways followed, paradoxically, patterns of scholarship familiar from Germany).⁵⁷

But, none the less, German-Jewish historiography, so powerfully influenced by the genius of Heinrich Graetz, was marked by its own distinguishing characteristics. In contrast to the Dubnov school, it manifested a deep interest in theology and theological thought for their own sake; and this fact, in turn, reflected a tendency to see the Jews as inextricably constituting both a religion and a people (however variously that latter term was defined). It carried with it the stamp both of the German philosophic school and of the Rankean faith in an objective and detached mode of historical scholarship. Alexander Altmann's *magnum opus* was his authoritative (and admiring) biography of Moses Mendelssohn;⁵⁸ while Nahum Glatzer devoted much of his research to Leopold Zunz (the leading figure in the first generation of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*) and to Franz Rosenzweig (existentialist, philosopher, theologian).⁵⁹

Of greater influence still in stimulating historiographical change has been the growing impact exerted by the social sciences on the historians in recent times. For the student of modern Jewish history, the study – both ‘empirical’ and theoretical – of ethnicity, national consciousness and nationalism by sociologists and cultural anthropologists has acted to change perceptions to a remarkable extent.⁶⁰ Sociology and anthropology have, likewise, combined to encourage the growth of microcosmic studies, local and urban histories, as well as the examination of everyday life as lived in the past in a particular time and place.⁶¹ Again, economics and demography have similarly stimulated research beyond the boundaries of political, ideological and cultural history.⁶² (A noteworthy side-effect of this particular development has been a renewed interest in a substratum of the Eastern European school of Jewish historiography: the socio-economic research associated initially with the socialist territorialist movement. With its emphasis on world-wide migratory trends and the

⁵⁷ D. Biale, *Gershom Scholem: Kabbalah and Counter-History* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979), pp. 5–12.

⁵⁸ A. Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn: A Biographical Study* (London, 1973).

⁵⁹ E.g. N. N. Glatzer (ed.), *Leopold Zunz: Jude-Deutscher-Europäer: ein jüdisches Gelehrtenchicksal des 19. Jahrhunderts in Briefen an Freunde* (Tübingen, 1964); and N. N. Glatzer, *Franz Rosenzweig: His Life and Thought* (New York, 1953).

⁶⁰ See note 79, below.

⁶¹ E.g. the impact exerted by the *Annales: économies-sociétés-civilisations* and by *Past and Present: Journal of Scientific History*.

⁶² For one example, see the publications of Peter Laslett and the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure.

universal laws of the market, it had from the first acted to counteract the concept of a Jewish people divided qualitatively between East and West.)⁶³

Finally, it can certainly be argued that the mainstream historiographical tradition had itself prepared the ground in many ways for its own revision. It is sufficient here perhaps to suggest two examples. First, Dubnov himself, from his middle years onward, declared it as his aim to write 'sociological' history;⁶⁴ he can hardly be said to have succeeded, as Salo Wittmayer Baron has pointed out,⁶⁵ but he laid down the challenge which others (for example, Baron himself and Jacob Katz)⁶⁶ soon took up.

Again, as we have noted, the political activism of the 'assimilated' Jews in the West was not ignored in the classic works but rather treated as something of an aberration, an anomaly or an anachronism, thus stimulating new research on this subject which could hardly be contained for long in an explanatory framework so paradoxical and ultimately unsatisfactory. (Indeed, when it came to this and similar issues, Shmuel Ettinger in some of his later research had clearly moved away from the bipolar perspective in favour of more dialectical, more complex theories. And he encouraged his students and colleagues to do likewise.)⁶⁷

If the classic historians sought the underlying laws of development, the grand generalizations, then the newer history rests more on

⁶³ The attempt to examine the socio-economic development of the Jewish people as a subject transcending narrow geographic limits can be traced back to the early efforts of such Marxist territorialists as Jacob Lestzchinsky (as well as to the efforts of Arthur Rupp and other German-Jewish scholars who founded the *Zeitschrift für Demographie und Statistik der Juden*).

⁶⁴ S. M. Dubnov, 'Obshchee vedenie', in *Vsemirnaia istoriia*, vol. 1, pp. xi-xx. (English edition: vol. 1, pp. 25-33). This introduction was concluded by Dubnov with the note 'St Petersburg, 1910/Berlin, 1924', *ibid.*, p. xxxii (English edition: p. 44).

⁶⁵ E.g. 'Dubnov... proclaimed the need for a sociological interpretation... But in his actual description of the Jewish past he has no more succeeded in realising his program than had Graetz in avoiding the pitfalls of the *Leidens und Gelehrtengegeschichte* which he himself had so bluntly denounced' (S. W. Baron, *History and Jewish Historians: Essays and Addresses* (Philadelphia, 1964), p. 78).

⁶⁶ See, for example: S. W. Baron, *The Jewish Community: Its History and Structure to the American Revolution*, 3 vols. (Philadelphia, 1942); S. W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, 18 vols. (New York, 1952-83); J. Katz, *Out of the Ghetto: The Social Background of Jewish Emancipation 1770-1870* (New York, 1973); J. Katz, *Tradition and Crisis* (New York, 1961).

⁶⁷ See, for example, S. Ettinger and I. Bartal, 'Shoreshei hayishuv hehadash beerez-yisrael', in *Sefer ha'aliyah harishonah*, ed. M. Eliav, vol. 1 (Jerusalem, 1981), pp. 1-24 (for the English version, see *The Jerusalem Cathedral*, vol. 11, (Jerusalem, 1982), pp. 197-210). Cf. the excellent article of B. Mevorah, 'Ikvotehah shel 'alilat damesek behitpatuta shel ha'itonut hayehudit beshanim 1840-1846', *Zion*, 23-4 (1958-9), 46-65.

differentiation. Indeed, its major contribution can, perhaps, be said to lie in making distinctions between concepts and processes previously seen as part of a single causal chain.

A clear example of this trend is the fact that in recent studies the Haskalah movement is no longer treated as necessarily a – let alone the – basic centrifugal force in a process leading from community to assimilation. Thus, once modernization is perceived as primarily a socio-economic phenomenon, ideology becomes only one among the many varied factors of change. Urbanization, industrialization, migration, market forces and the opportunities (educational, occupational, cultural) available all combined to undermine the traditional life of the Jewish people in nineteenth-century Europe. The Haskalah movement was, of course, in part the product of such forces and, depending on time and place, itself contributed to the momentum of change. But, in recent studies, its significance has been much reduced. There is little argument today with the view of those sociologists who describe ‘modernisation . . . as a kind of tidal wave sweeping out from the West across the globe and bringing in its train industry, science and their social and political consequences’.⁶⁸ (Of course, it should be added at once that even tidal waves break when they come up against natural barriers of sufficient height and strength, but that is a subject which will be discussed separately below.)

In his history of Jewish life in Georgian England, Todd Endelman reached the conclusion that the integration of the Jews into the society at large was not only very rapid but actually had very little to do with issues of ideology, theory and faith.⁶⁹ Or as he has summarized his findings elsewhere:

Most Jewish historians until recently looked to the German Jewish experience as the paradigm for the transformation of European Jewry. . . . [But] to paraphrase Marx – and to put the matter crudely – German Jews were thinking what Jews elsewhere, and in England in particular, were already doing . . . In England acculturation and integration were well advanced before the 1770s.⁷⁰

And Steven J. Zipperstein in his studies of the Jews in Odessa has reached very similar conclusions. The breakneck development of the Russian port-city in the early nineteenth century generated the demands for modern

⁶⁸ A. Smith, *Theories of Nationalism* (London, 1971), p. 117. (In this quotation, Smith is summarizing the viewpoint of Ernest Gellner.)

⁶⁹ T. M. Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England 1714–1830: Tradition and Change in Liberal Society* (Philadelphia, 1979), particularly pp. 272–93.

⁷⁰ Idem., ‘The Englishness of Jewish Modernity in England’, in J. Katz (ed.), *Toward Modernity: The European Jewish Model* (New Brunswick, N.J. 1987), pp. 225–6.

education and cultural activity which sought many outlets; the Germanizing *maskilim* from Galicia had not produced this situation and they were by no means alone in responding to it. 'The assumption', he has written,

that the development of this [the Haskalah] movement is synonymous with the modernisation of Russian Jewry focuses attention primarily on the history of ideas and allows little attention to be paid to the social components of the transformation.⁷¹

Modernization theory, however, has proved to be only one of the factors leading to a different perception of the Haskalah and its contribution to assimilation. The concentration on regional studies (whether of a specific city, locality or country), rather than on overall analysis, has made it logical to emphasize the high degree of autonomy which characterized the movement in different areas. What has emerged as a result is a picture painted less in black and white and more in various shades of grey. The *maskilim* in Bohemia, in particular, but also in Hungary and in the Tsarist Empire, are now described for the most part as far removed in their thinking from the more radical representatives of the Berlin Haskalah.

The authors contributing to the recent collection of essays edited by Jacob Katz, *Towards Modernity*, nearly all chose to elaborate on this theme. Emanuel Etkes, for example, emphasized that the Russian *maskilim*, admirers though they were of Berlin, 'did not envision themselves breaking down barriers and throwing off the yoke of Torah'.⁷² And of the movement in Hungary, Michael Silber wrote that 'the boundaries between rabbinic and Haskalah cultures were not sharply defined'.⁷³ Similarly, Hillel Kieval could argue that the *maskilim* in Prague

confidently pursued a policy of accommodation weaving together European rationalism, respect for religious sensitivities and loyalty to Jewish traditions.⁷⁴

Again, despite the support that Trieste Jews gave to Wessely and Homberg (who lived in that city from 1782 to 1787), 'their sense of cultural

⁷¹ S. J. Zipperstein, 'Haskalah, Cultural Change and Nineteenth Century Jewry: a Reassessment', *Journal of Jewish Studies* 35, no. 2 (1983), 193.

⁷² E. Etkes, 'Immanent Factors and External Influences in the Development of the Haskalah Movement in Russia', in Katz (ed.), *Toward Modernity*, p. 29.

⁷³ M. Silber, 'The Historical Experience of German Jewry and its Impact on Haskalah and Reform in Hungary', *ibid.*, p. 113.

⁷⁴ H. J. Kieval, 'Caution's Progress: the Modernization of Jewish Life in Prague, 1780-1830', *ibid.*, p. 83.

continuity with their own, and with medieval Sephardic traditions', concluded Lois Dubin, 'permitted them to see harmony between old and new'.⁷⁵

Finally, the relationship between the *maskilim* and the despotic regimes of Central and Eastern Europe, both of the 'enlightened' and the unenlightened variety, has, likewise, come in for its share of re-examination in recent years. Even the most extreme case, the Tsarist government, always seen with reason as the bastion of violently anti-Jewish policies in Europe, has emerged from this process of revision as motivated less by the desire to uproot, persecute or forcibly convert its large Jewish population and more by mercantilist and utilitarian strategies inevitably distorted by, and contradictorily interpreted within the bureaucratic labyrinth.⁷⁶

The belief of the *maskilim* that they, in principle, shared certain common ground with the regime thus comes to look not so much like crass self-delusion bordering on betrayal, but rather as grounded on a calculated risk. In his book on the Jews in the period of Nicholas I, Michael Stanislawski even argues that in some way the gamble of the *maskilim* on the regime paid off. The leadership of Russian Jewry (including Leon Pinsker) which emerged during the reign of Alexander II had been educated to a large extent, after all, in the schools, and in the rabbinical seminaries in Vilna and Zhitomir, established by the state during the reign of Nicholas I. In Stanislawski's words:

Despite the intense opposition of the Orthodox, and hence the modest enrollments, the schools... educated a large part of the next cohort of the Russian-Jewish intellectual elite and provided the *maskilim* with employment opportunities and financial security. Confident of their eventual victory and the inevitable liberation, the *maskilim* became, by the end of Nicholas's rule, a self-conscious and self-confident intelligentsia, dedicated to creating a new life and culture for Russia's Jews.⁷⁷

The tendency to uncouple the Haskalah (a cultural and elitist movement) from the socio-economic process of modernization reflects, in part,

⁷⁵ L. Dubin, 'Trieste and Berlin: the Italian Role in the Cultural Politics of the Haskalah', *ibid.*, p. 209.

⁷⁶ See, e.g., H. Rogger, *Jewish Policies and Right-wing Politics in Imperial Russia* (London, 1986); M. Aronson, 'The Attitudes of Russian Officials in the 1880s Toward Jewish Assimilation and Emigration', *Slavic Review* 34 (1975), 11-18; M. Aronson, 'The Prospects for the Emancipation of Russian Jewry During the 1880s', *Slavonic and East European Review* 55 (1977), 167-82.

⁷⁷ M. Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews: The Transformation of Jewish Society in Russia 1825-1855* (Philadelphia, 1983), pp. 187-8.

a more fundamental distinction absorbed by the newer historiography – the differentiation made between the concepts of ‘acculturation’ and ‘assimilation’.

To national historians such as Dubnov and Mahler it seemed a truism that the replacement of Hebrew and Yiddish by modern European languages was bound to carry the Jewish people very far towards its complete assimilation, towards its total disappearance, its self-destruction. Deprived of state and territory, the Jews had only their language in which to maintain and develop a coherent and separate national life. The division in the nineteenth century between the Jews of Eastern Europe and those of Western Europe, between community and assimilation, was understood primarily in terms of linguistic dynamics; on the one side, the historic languages of the Jewish nation had been not only preserved but also cultivated and developed; on the other, they had been set aside, abandoned.

But as the concept of ‘acculturation’ established itself, so the language issue was bound to lose its exclusive significance and become only one among the many factors taken into account by the historians in analysing the metamorphosis undergone by Jewish group consciousness.

It appears to be widely acknowledged that it was the sociologist Milton M. Gordon who, with his book of 1964, *Assimilation in American Life*,⁷⁸ did more than anybody else to win acceptance for the idea that ‘acculturation’ should be clearly distinguished from ‘assimilation’. And there is no question that Gordon has been highly influential in disseminating both his sociological lexicon and his methods of analysis.

However, Gordon’s work is only part of a much broader and growing tendency among sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists and historians (apparent since the 1960s) to re-examine such phenomena as ethnicity, nationality and nationalism. As a safe generalization, it can be said that many, although by no means all of the scholars involved, have concluded that national and ethnic consciousness is best understood not as the product of external forces, whether socio-economic, political or linguistic, but rather as an independent factor in its own right.⁷⁹ In other

⁷⁸ M. M. Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion and National Origins* (New York, 1964). Cf. M. M. Gordon, *Human Nature, Class and Ethnicity* (New York, 1978).

⁷⁹ See, e.g., J. Armstrong, *Nations Before Nationalism* (Chapel Hill, N.C. 1982); G. P. Castile and G. Kushner, *Persistent Peoples: Cultural Enclaves in Perspective* (Tucson, Ariz., 1981); G. De Vos and L. Romanucci (eds.), *Ethnic Identity: Cultural Continuities*

words, they reject the unidirectional, reductionist and determinist interpretations common to much of the Marxist, neo-Marxist and sociological (functionalist, structuralist; developmental) writings on this subject.

For the Jewish historians, this growing corpus of scholarly investigation has proved to be of the greatest significance. It encourages a view of group consciousness as developing in openended, unpredictable and idiosyncratic ways. Thus the loss of linguistic and cultural distinctiveness is not seen as necessarily bringing with it a loss of ethnic identity. Substitute forms of cohesion can be forged round new institutions, ideologies and causes, be they religious, philanthropic or political.

The studies of Gordon and many other sociologists have focused attention on structural factors which, under certain circumstances, prevent acculturation from leading on to 'complete assimilation'.⁸⁰ As long as Jews (or, for that matter, the members of any other *ethos*) tend to live in the same neighbourhoods, attend the same schools, work in the same very specific branches of the economy, attend the same clubs and above all find their friends and marriage partners within the same group, they can be expected to survive indefinitely as a separate entity. There is no guarantee that these conditions will always hold. Even in nineteenth-century Europe they did not prevail universally, but recent studies have emphasized how frequently they were of great importance almost everywhere, whether in Vienna, Berlin, Paris or London.⁸¹

For their part, cultural anthropologists have sought to explain the tenacity, the sheer will to survive, often demonstrated by ethnic groups when threatened by the homogenizing forces of modernization. They have emphasized the weight of the past on the present; the power of what they term 'primordial' loyalties; the instinctive mechanisms of 'boundary

and Change (Chicago, 1975); E. K. Francis, *Interethnic Relations: an Essay in Sociological Theory* (New York, 1976); G. Geertz (ed.), *Old Societies and New States: The Quest for Modernity in Asia and Africa* (New York, 1963); J. Krejci and V. Velinsky, *Ethnic and Political Nations in Europe* (London, 1981); J. Rothschild, *Ethno-politics* (New York, 1981); H. Seton-Watson, *Nations and States: An Enquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism* (London, 1977), A. D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford, 1987).

⁸⁰ Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life*, pp. 60–83. Cf. C. Goldscheider, *Social Change and Jewish Continuity* (Bloomington, 1985); F. Kobrin and C. Goldscheider, *The Ethnic Factor in Family Structure and Mobility* (Cambridge, Mass., 1978).

⁸¹ See, e.g. M. L. Rozenblit, *The Jews of Vienna, 1867–1914: Assimilation and Identity* (Albany, N.Y. 1983); D. Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry, 1780–1840* (New York, 1987); R. S. Wistrich, *The Jews of Vienna in the Age of Franz Joseph* (Oxford, 1989).

maintenance'; the persistent attraction exerted by historically rooted symbols and myths; and the ultimately subjective nature of ethnic or national identities.

And these theories, too, have influenced our perceptions of Jewish history in the nineteenth century, bringing with them as they do a heightened awareness of the fact that group loyalties in modern society tend to overlap in a wide variety of complex and even contradictory ways, and that the responses to a multicultural environment will be highly differentiated. Here is an issue, after all, touching on the deep inner core of the individual self.

All in all, the thesis that acculturation does not necessarily lead to assimilation has served to undermine the conception of Jewish history in nineteenth-century Europe as bipolar, sharply divided between East and West. In recent years, historians have focused the spotlight more on the modernizing processes gaining momentum within the Jewish communities of Eastern Europe; and, at the same time, on the forces of reintegration, group cohesion, historical continuity and ethnic consciousness at work in the West.

The process of historiographical re-examination has, by now, reached and, in varying degrees, undermined many of the other theses once regarded as all but axiomatic. It will suffice to mention two additional areas of particular interest to the historian of nineteenth-century Jewry: those of theology and scholarship, on the one hand, and of Jewish politics, on the other.

For the nationalist school of historiography, as already noted, the consolidation of the Reform movement was generally seen as organically linked to the struggle for emancipation. The acquisition of equal rights could not be obtained in the German states unless a price was paid; and according to the terms of this implicit social contract, the Jews had, therefore, to renounce all mention of an eventual national restoration to Zion, to their own homeland. Once consolidated in Germany, the movement, with its antinational ethos, spread to other countries in Central and Western Europe as well as to the United States (although not to the Tsarist Empire).

Again, in a very similar way, the extraordinarily influential school of modern Jewish scholarship in Germany, the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* was treated with much greater sympathy than the Reform movement; but it, too, was accused of adopting an 'apologetic' tone and tendentious methods of selectivity in order to facilitate (or, later, consolidate) the process of emancipation.

However, here too the tendency today is to disentangle processes previously regarded as organically united. And as a result, these two movements are increasingly analysed as following their own paths of development, as interacting with their environment according to their own inner logic. The history of the Reform movement has, thus, been subtly redrawn. Today, for example, much more emphasis is put on the fact that the radical reforming wing represented by Holdheim never, in fact, succeeded in becoming anything other than highly marginal within the organized life of German Jewry.⁸²

In general, the Jewish communities in Germany remained united (although there were, of course, exceptional cases, the most notable of which was Samson Raphael Hirsch's *Austrittsgemeinde*), and, in consequence, there was strong pressure to maintain a minimal degree of consensus. The fact that the communities were granted the power of taxation by the state and thus enjoyed quasi-governmental status served to reinforce this tendency, as did the predominantly conservative political environment which prevailed in Germany after 1848. To the extent that reformers in Central Europe succeeded in winning truly significant support, they did so by concentrating on issues of style rather than of theological substance. The famous rabbi Isak Noah Mannheimer of Vienna who followed this path and exerted great influence throughout the Habsburg Empire, above all in Hungary, has come to replace Holdheim for the historians as the archetype of the reform leader in Germany and in the Habsburg Empire.⁸³

In contrast, it was in the United States, where the question of equal rights had long been settled (if it had ever really existed), that radical Reform truly took hold, carried across the seas by the great German-Jewish emigration of the middle of the century. In the rabbinical declaration issued in Pittsburgh in 1885,⁸⁴ Holdheim's theology enjoyed its triumph. This startling development, though, resulted not from the struggle for emancipation, but rather from its absence, from the internalization of the liberal credo with its belief in the inevitability of progress, in the imminent triumph of human brotherhood and in the universality of ethical absolutes.

⁸² See, e.g., M. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 138–42; 180–91.

⁸³ E.g. R. S. Wistrich, 'The Modernization of Viennese Jewry: the Impact of German Culture in a Multi-Ethnic State', in Katz (ed.), *Toward Modernity*, pp. 46–9. (Cf. M. Rozenblit in this volume, pp. 230–4.)

⁸⁴ On the historical context from which the Pittsburgh declaration emerged: Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, pp. 264–95.

However, it is typical of the newer historiography that, even when it comes to the American Reform movement, attention is paid as much to the limitations as to the extremes of change. Benny Kraut, for example, has made the point that

while Felsenthal alone among the radicals became an outspoken advocate of Zionism, by the turn of the century, even [Samuel] Hirsch and Kohler employed terms like 'Jewish people', 'Jewish race' and 'Jewish nation'... [which] seems almost contradictory to the standard dichotomous stereotype of an antiethnic or antinational classical Reform Judaism.⁸⁵

For the most part (to repeat ourselves), the revisionism under discussion here has developed cumulatively, hesitantly and almost imperceptibly. But this has not been the case when it comes to the issue of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. In the mid 1970s, two historians, Ismar Schorsch and Gershon Cohen, published articles defending the school of nineteenth-century German-Jewish scholarship in the most outspoken terms. They therein responded directly to Gershom Scholem's argument that the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* had (in part consciously, in part not) served the cause of apologetics, accommodation, assimilation.

Men such as Zunz and Geiger, in Scholem's view, had repudiated the romanticism without which the historian of a nation cannot respond creatively to the past. Their ideology of rationalism was motivated by an obvious anxiety to uphold universal values in the face of the German nationalist Judeophobia which drew so much of its strength from romanticism. In thus cultivating the values of detachment and (a spurious) objectivity, they demonstrated that they had reconciled themselves to the continued decline and disintegration of the Jewish people. To have written in a spirit of rebellion against accommodationism, to have aroused new life and hope in the nation, would have cut them off from the established Jewish community in Germany; and that was a risk which they were not prepared to take. The entire enterprise recalled the mortuary and Scholem saw as typical Steinschneider's remark to one of his students that 'we have no other task but to provide all this with a "decent" burial'.⁸⁶ 'You see before you', wrote Scholem,

giants who for their own reasons have turned themselves into grave-diggers, embalmers and even eulogizers; giants who act as dwarfs collecting plants in the

⁸⁵ B. Kraut, 'A Unitarian Rabbi? The Case of Solomon H. Sonneschein', in T. Endelman (ed.), *Jewish Apostasy in the Modern World* (New York, 1987), pp. 296-7.

⁸⁶ G. Scholem, 'Mitokh hirhurim al hokhmat yisrael', in G. Scholem, *Devarim bego: pirkei morashah utehiyah* (Tel Aviv, 1975), p. 393.

fields of the past, drying them to make sure that the sap of life is eliminated and then putting them into a book – or is it a grave?⁸⁷

As Schorsch saw it, this critique was not only ‘harsh and tendentious’, but actually bore almost no relationship to the facts. ‘If’, he wrote,

the motive of giving Judaism a decent burial is verifiable anywhere in the *Wissenschaft* movement, it is only in the early work of Isaak Jost, where the mood fluctuates between animosity and ambivalence. It is this pervasive antagonism which is so conspicuously absent from the work of Zunz.⁸⁸

For his part, Gershon Cohen maintained that the archetypal representative of the movement was in reality Hermann Graetz. For Scholem, Graetz was merely the remarkable exception who proved the rule – the historian who, despite his belief in the illusory liberal ‘utopia’, none the less, with his loyalty to romanticism, had played a ‘constructive’ role. But Cohen now argued that:

if anyone pretended about his real motives it was not Zunz, Geiger, Frankel, Graetz or David Hoffman . . . but Moritz Steinschneider the would-be Jewish mortician of Jewish learning and literature. If Steinschneider deserves any reproach, I submit, it is for his *dissimulating* that his work aimed at giving Judaism a decent burial. But [he] . . . was a maverick in many ways . . . and why should a culture be evaluated by its eccentrics? . . . German-Jewish scholarship was a massive effort at reinfusing vitality into what many Jews had understandably come to regard as a fossil.⁸⁹

In his insistence that the history of the Jews was the history not simply of a religion, but also of a people, a nation, Graetz spoke not for himself alone but for the entire circle associated with the Jewish Theological Seminary in Breslau (founded by Zacharias Frankel in 1854). ‘Von Treitschke’, concluded Cohen,

may well have been a Jew-hater but he . . . understood very well what Graetz’s gut conception of Jewish history and the Jewish people was. Graetz could not sunder Judaism from the Jewish people, and his monumental *Geschichte* will forever remain not only one of the classic expositions of Jewish history, but one of the great nineteenth-century affirmations of the national and religious integrity of world Jewry.⁹⁰

(Note should be taken here, perhaps, of the fact that Cohen and Schorsch would both be appointed in later years, and in succession, to the post of

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 392.

⁸⁸ I. Schorsch, ‘From Wolfenbützel to Wissenschaft: the Divergent Paths of Isaak Markus Jost and Leopold Zunz’, *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 32 (1977), 144.

⁸⁹ G. D. Cohen, ‘German Jewry as Mirror of Modernity’, *ibid.* 20 (1975), xxv, xxvii.

⁹⁰ Ibid., xxviii.

chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, which in many ways has, throughout, taken Breslau as its model.)

If the history of Reform Judaism and of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* has understandably become a subject of great interest to scholars in America, the study of modern Jewish politics has, for equally obvious reasons, attracted especial attention from historians who teach at Israeli universities. In this area of research, what has been directly challenged is the assumption that Jewish politics as a fully fledged and truly modern phenomenon was produced by the nationalist upsurge of – and thus post-dates – the year 1881. (To permit myself a personal note, I should perhaps point out that in my own work I have, albeit with qualification, elaborated on the idea that 1881 did represent a major turning-point in Jewish history and so must declare myself here as among those now subject to the revisionist critique.)⁹¹

The bipolar model – sharply dividing the nationalist from the prenationalist era – has come under fire from two opposing flanks. On the one side, there are a number of Israeli historians (Yaakov Kaniel and Arye Morgenstern, for example)⁹² who argue forcefully that the factor of tradition in the making of Jewish nationalism has been much underestimated; that Palestine – the land of Israel – had been resettled steadily by Jews since the eighteenth century or even earlier; and that the waves of immigration to that country after 1881 were made up largely of religious Jews hardly different in type or motivation from those who had come earlier.

In short, continuity was more important than change. (This thesis was, no doubt, implicit in Dinur's emphasis on the explosive proto-Zionism of the traditional world, but he none the less gloried in the immense power of the revolutionary forces unleashed by modernity.) The attempt of recent years to blur, in this way, the dividing line separating the old from the new has proved to be highly controversial,⁹³ but it touches only tangentially on the theme of this book.

⁹¹ J. Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism and the Russian Jews* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 49–132; J. Frankel, 'The Crisis of 1881–82 as a Turning Point in Modern Jewish History', in D. Berger (ed.), *The Legacy of Jewish Migration: 1881 and its Impact* (New York, 1983), pp. 9–22.

⁹² Y. Kaniel, *Hemshekh utmurah: hayishuv hayashan vehayishuv beḥadash betkufat haaliyah hashnuyah* (Jerusalem, 1982); A. Morgenstern, *Meshihiut veyishuv erez-yisrael bemahazit ha-rishonah shel hameah ha-19* (Jerusalem, 1985).

⁹³ See, for example, I. Bartal's responses to Morgenstern's book: 'Messianic Expectations and their Place in History', in R. Cohen (ed.), *Vision and Conflict in the Holy Land* (Jerusalem, 1985), pp. 171–81; and 'Meshihiut vehistoria', *Zion* 52 (1987), 117–30. For Morgenstern's rejoinder: 'Al bikoret hameshihiut bemeah ha-19', *ibid.*, 371–89.

In contrast, it is possible to identify an opposing group of historians whose work clearly falls within the revisionist framework described here. When historians such as Michael Graetz, Eli Lederhendlere, and Israel Bartal subvert the dichotomous concept, they do so by asserting the primacy not of tradition, but of modernity. They describe how novel forms of Jewish political activism and organization took shape gradually but with growing momentum throughout the course of many decades before 1881.

The new politics, as depicted in studies of this genre, was *sui generis* neither anachronistic nor anomalous, and cannot be reduced conceptually either to a residual traditionalism or to a proto-, or precocious, nationalism. Thus, in his book on the origins of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, Michael Graetz demonstrated that, founded in 1860, it was the creation of highly acculturated, and (even in many cases) marginal Jews, acting as such. They were impelled by a complex amalgam of motives: an abiding commitment to liberal and universalistic values; and alienation from the French intelligentsia which in their eyes hardly appeared to be living up to those values; a revival of Jewish ethnic consciousness (partly in consequence of that alienation); and a renewed sense of solidarity with the Jewish people in France and world-wide. Eventually, they found themselves allied to equally modernized members of the French-Jewish establishment, among them leading figures in the financial elite of the country.⁹⁴

In the fight for equal rights at home and for the security of Jews endangered abroad, the Jewish communities in the West had found a cause which combined the dominant ideology of the middle of the century (the doctrine of human rights and constitutionalism) with loyalty to the ethnic group (variously defined in religious, populist or quasi-national terms). I have suggested elsewhere that this specific form of Jewish political activism, which is associated with such figures as Crémieux, Riesser and Montefiore and with such organizations as the Alliance, the Board of Deputies and the Anglo-Jewish Association, can, perhaps, best be termed 'emancipationist' as distinct from the 'traditional' and from the

⁹⁴ M. Graetz, *Haperiferiyah haitah lemerkaz: perakim betoldot yahadut zarfat bemeah ha-19* (Jerusalem, 1982). For a more critical appraisal of the politics pursued by the Jewish leadership in France (as well as in Germany), see Michael R. Marrus, 'Jewry and the Politics of Assimilation: Assessment and Reassessment', *The Journal of Modern History* 49 (1977), 88-109. (Cf. Michael R. Marrus, *The Politics of Assimilation: A Study of the French Jewish Community at the Time of the Dreyfus Affair* (Oxford, 1971).

'auto-emancipationist' or national models of Jewish politics.⁹⁵ (In this field as in others already discussed, revisionism has brought with it the 'rediscovery', as it were, of historians whose topics of interest fell outside the area spotlighted by nationalist historiography. Such diverse names as Cyrus Adler and Lucien Wolf immediately come to mind.)⁹⁶

Israel Bartal's work on early Jewish nationalism (or 'national consciousness') as it developed in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, can be seen as complementing that of Michael Graetz. He has consistently argued that such nationalism was in the making from the 1830s; was engendered primarily by the joint impact made on the Jewish world by the Enlightenment, by emancipation, by romanticism and by Christian millenarianism; and that, to no small extent, it had to 'rediscover' the traditional community, motifs and symbols.⁹⁷

The political activism of Western organizations such as the Board of Deputies and the Alliance Israélite Universelle, even though their own ideology was not nationalist, none the less inspired the self-confidence, the optimism and the faith in resurgent Jewish power, which alone made possible the plans formulated from the 1830s onwards for the resettlement of the Jewish people in Palestine. Within the emergent nationalist circles, the traditional and the modern groups acted on totally different premises but, none the less, coexisted uneasily in a dialectical relationship; influencing now the one, now the other; mutually dependent. Or as it was put in the essay of 1981 published jointly by Bartal and Shmuel Ettinger (who, as already noted, was ready enough to re-examine established formulas):

The processes of interaction between tradition and innovation; between the pre-modern and the acculturated worlds; between the hopes inspired by emancipation and the sense of alienation, of being rejected – all made themselves strongly felt during the three different periods in which modern national consciousness, then emerging, discovered the pull of Palestine – the forties, the sixties and the early eighties of the nineteenth century.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ J. Frankel, 'Crisis as a Factor in Modern Jewish Politics: 1840 and 1881–82', in J. Reinhartz (ed.), *Living with Antisemitism: Modern Jewish Responses* (Hanover, N. H., 1987), pp. 42–58.

⁹⁶ E.g. C. Adler and A. A. Margalit, *American Intercession on Behalf of Jews in the Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States* (New York, 1948); L. Wolf, *Notes on the Diplomatic History of the Jewish Question* (London, 1919).

⁹⁷ E.g. I. Bartal, 'Moshe Montefiori veerez-yisrael', *Katedra letoldot erez-yisrael veyishuvah* 33 (1984), 149–60.

⁹⁸ Ettinger and Bartal, 'Shoreshei hayishuv hehadash beerez-yisrael', in Eliav, *Sefer ha'aliyah harishonah*, p. 6.

In such passages as these, then, the emphasis is not on the opposing poles *per se*, but on their points of contact, on the overlap of continuity and change, on 1881 as culmination rather than revolution.

In his recent book, *The Road to Modern Jewish Politics*,⁹⁹ as well as in a number of his articles on the political activism of the Russian Jews, Eli Lederhendler has suggested a similar redrawing of the map. At one level, it is true, he has simply undertaken to analyse the role of the modernizing Jewish intelligentsia in the Tsarist Empire during the reigns of Nicholas I and Alexander II from a more empathetic vantage point; or, in other words, to add his contribution to the rehabilitation of the Haskalah movement. He argues that the *maskilim*, in their attempt to recruit the support of the regime, not only had much logic on their side but had actually proved able to appropriate and redefine traditional political functions. 'If by 1881', writes Lederhendler,

men like Gordon, Lilienblum, Leon Pinsker and their fellow *maskilim* were playing leadership roles in Russian Jewish politics, it is clear that somehow the *maskilim* were able, over the course of two generations, to transform a position on the extreme periphery of Jewish life into a beachhead of considerable strategic advantage and even a certain degree of legitimacy. It is also clear that they must have accomplished this not simply by dint of cultural or literary activity but through a political struggle.¹⁰⁰

Or, as he put it elsewhere:

For the *maskilim*, the defense of the Jews' human dignity was a way in which they could declare their unequivocal affinity to their community, while allowing them scope to promote the value of enlightened religious tolerance, the importance of learning the language of the land and earning the trust of the state. . . . Their political activities were the factor that transformed them from literati to public figures.¹⁰¹

At another level, though, Lederhendler goes further. The rapid growth during the years 1860 to 1880 of the Jewish press (published variously in Hebrew, Yiddish, Russian and Polish) brought with it, in his estimate, a qualitative change in the politics of Russian Jewry. Control over this

⁹⁹ E. Lederhendler, *The Road to Modern Jewish Politics: Political Tradition and Political Reconstruction in the Jewish Community of Tsarist Russia* (New York, 1989). Cf. Lederhendler's article in this volume, pp. 324–43; and E. Lederhendler, 'Interpreting Messianic Rhetoric in the Russian Haskalah and Early Zionism', *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, vol. vii, *Jews and Messianism in the Modern Era: Metaphor and Meaning*, ed. J. Frankel (New York, 1991), pp. 14–33.

¹⁰⁰ Lederhendler, *The Road to Modern Jewish Politics*, p. 88.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

medium rapidly conferred on the intelligentsia the power to disseminate their ideas on a totally new scale; to appeal alike to the Jewish public, Russian opinion and governmental authority; to earn prestige and influence on a scale hitherto utterly denied to them; and to establish themselves as a political leadership group. They developed novel modes of political rhetoric (part traditional, part radical) and ambitious strategies of change.

The strong focus thus directed on to the period of Alexander II sharply reduces the scale of 1881 as the great watershed year. 'In other words', asks Lederhendler,

can ideological change really be best understood as a self-generating and self-explaining process or ought one to look for underlying structural changes in the political life of [the] society?¹⁰²

Conclusion

Any attempt such as that made here to isolate and sharply define major trends of thought in a particular area of scholarship must, by its very nature, be flawed. A high degree of selectivity and subjectivity is unavoidable. For any statement chosen from the historiographical canon as representative, quintessential, another can be found (if so desired) to prove the opposite. None the less, the essays collected in this volume do, surely, in varying degrees, reflect a changing mood as well as changing methods. And an attempt to set that change in context can possibly serve to clarify issues otherwise left undefined.

It has been our contention here that there is an historiographical school that can be defined as Eastern European, or as nationalist, or as following the tradition of Dubnov; that it achieved a dominant or mainstream status for some two generations (from the 1930s until the late 1960s); and that today for many reasons it is under challenge. In the older historiography, the clash between community and assimilation, Eastern and Western European Jewry, centripetal and centrifugal forces served as the key, the paradigmatic theme. It permitted order to be brought out of chaos. It was the source of extraordinary vitality. It made it possible to survey the entire history of the Jewish people in the modern age *sub specie aeternitatis* and yet in wholly secular terms.

The more recent historiography is no longer informed by a bipolar world-view. In one sense, therefore, a more unified view of Jewish history

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 4.

is implicit in its underlying assumptions. East is no longer clearly divided from West. Greater credence is lent to the survivalist strategies of Western Jewry; and less romanticism is employed to describe the masses of Eastern Europe. And Jewish political activism, as it developed in the nineteenth century, is seen as transcending the East-West divide.

But in another sense, we are left with a sub-world subjected to a multiplicity of conflicting forces interacting in unpredictable ways. Acculturation is no longer seen as leading necessarily to assimilation; in many cases it did; in others it did not. The Jewish masses are no longer seen as necessarily loyal to the community; sometimes they were; sometimes they were not. Every place, every time, every group, could manifest different results in different permutations. Order has been replaced by flux; one law of motion by a myriad of contexts, and by a multiplicity of responses.

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