

TWENTIETH CENTURY JEWS

Judaism and Jewish Life

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Twentieth Century Jews

Forging Identity in the Land of Promise
and in the Promised Land

Monty Noam Penkower

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To My Grandchildren

“...and may you live to see your children’s children. Peace be on Israel!”

Psalms 128:6

Table of Contents

Introduction	ix
PART I: A TURNING POINT	
1. The Kishinev Pogrom of 1903	1
PART II: IN THE LAND OF PROMISE	
2. Abraham Isaac Selmanovitz: Guardian of Tradition	43
3. The “Jewish Seat” of Justice Felix Frankfurter	75
4. The Genesis of the American Council for Judaism	115
5. The Jewish Times of Arthur Hays Sulzberger	143
PART III: IN THE PROMISED LAND	
6. The Silences of Bialik	185
7. A Lost Opportunity for Orthodoxy	221
8. Haim Arlosoroff’s Murder and Israel’s Political Divide	261
9. Shlomo Ben-Yosef: From a British Gallows to Israel’s Pantheon to Obscurity	311
Bibliography	357
Index	385

Introduction

THE PAST CENTURY, AS NO OTHER, CHALLENGED THE VERY EXISTENCE of the Jewish people. Deservedly dubbed “the terrible twentieth,”¹ these years witnessed antisemitic pogroms across Eastern Europe, the awesome devastation of World War I, and the singular tragedy since known as the Holocaust. Millions of Jews perished; entire communities were destroyed, reduced to fading memory and scant record.

Jewish identity confronted additional challenges. In the same span of time, countless youth who had jettisoned religious Orthodoxy embraced the banner of leftist revolution or that of entrepreneurial capitalism. While labels such as “the Jewish century” are questionable, Jews did contribute in significant measure to forging a secular world, one grown increasingly technological, rootless, and dismissive of tradition.² The lure of assimilation, championing creativity and independence, proved devastating for the communal attachment of an ethnic minority no longer bound by mandatory covenant, but by individual choice. Apathy, intermarriage, even conversion became commonplace as the ancestral ties of more than four millennia fell prey to attenuation and abandonment.

Liberal Jewish voices hailed the new age, certain that a Judaism of rational ethics could serve mightily in the progressive movement of humankind toward freedom. That religion’s universal ethos as expressed in the one God, asserted the German philosopher Hermann Cohen, forecast the dissolution of many communities into a collective ideal. Together with the young Franz Rosenzweig, Cohen objected to Zionism’s undermining the distinctive spiritual nature of the Jewish people, which he thought required the Diaspora in order to labor for the world’s redemption. In like vein, Lucien Wolf, historian and secretary of the Anglo-Jewish establishment’s Joint Foreign Committee, concluded an article on Zionism for the classic 1911 edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* by pontificating that “artificial” Jewish nationalism would disappear under the influence of religious toleration and naturalization laws, and with the “passing away” of antisemitism. “If the Jewish people disappear with it,” he ended, “it will only be because either their religious mission in the world has been accomplished or they have proved themselves unworthy of it.”³

In separate fashion, some distinguished Gentiles lauded Judaism’s influence upon modernity triumphant. While expressing sympathy for the

Hebrew renaissance and condemning Russian antisemitism in unequivocal terms, Maxim Gorki acknowledged the contribution of Jewish “heroic idealism.” Jews, declared this acclaimed author of social realism, “saved the world from submissiveness and self-satisfaction,” and would help establish “the Law of Socialism” in a re-made order to be governed by “the new principles of equality and justice.” For the American economist Thorstein Veblen, on the other hand, the current intellectual prominence of the Jew in Europe lay in the fact that “he is the most unattached, the most marginalized, and the most skeptical and unconventional of all scientists.” By curing the Jews of their homelessness, he averred in early 1919, Zionism would spell the end of the preeminence of this “disturber of the intellectual peace.”⁴

Other Jews, taking a particularistic stance, argued that in an amoral world, the reality of power transcended lofty appeals to spirituality, justice, and reason. Lethal Jew-hatred did not allow for much retreat into the assimilated Franz Kafka’s prose universe, where modern man makes a futile search for personal salvation. Youngsters in Russia and Palestine began to arm themselves, deeming the call of western co-religionists to radicalize humanity through the example of prophetic ethics an idle fancy. Political Zionism’s fundamental belief that the establishment of “a home for the Jewish people in Palestine secured under public law” (the Basle Program adopted at the first World Zionist Congress in 1897) was Jewry’s overriding need stirred the East European masses, then engaged in a daily struggle for physical survival. Alas, that conviction found corroboration in the crematoria. The American poet Karl Shapiro captured his people’s perennial plight when, writing in the post-World War II “Travelogue for Exiles,” he cried out: “Speak then and ask the forest and the loam./ What do you hear? What does the land command?/ *The earth is taken: this is not your home.*”⁵

Few non-Jews grasped the ineluctable truth as early and as sharply as George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans), considered by many critics one of the greatest English novelists. Coming two years after her proto-Zionist fiction *Daniel Deronda* (1876), a lengthy essay entitled “The Modern Hep! Hep! Hep!” warned that the canard and vilification regularly cast against Jewry begat violence and murder. (“Hep” had first served as the Medieval Crusaders’ cry “*Hierosolyma est perdita*,” or “Jerusalem is lost,” as they killed Jews in Germany and France before redeeming the Holy Land from Muslim control.) At the same time, noted Eliot, the exceptional intensity of this people’s steadfastness raised a welcome possibility: “the restoration of a Jewish State planted on the old ground as a centre of national feeling, a source of dignifying protection, a

special channel for special energies, which may contribute some added form of national genius, and an added voice in the councils of the world.”⁶

No one, including the luminaries cited above, could have foreseen Nazi Germany’s methodical zeal to annihilate the Jews of Europe, nor that Christianity and the Enlightenment’s western heirs would stand by while death stalked innocent men, women, and children. The ghastly outcome, compounded by its immeasurable loss, converted Jews worldwide and increasing numbers of Gentiles to rally around Palestine as Jewry’s ultimate salvation. A “pariah people” (Max Weber’s phrase of World War I vintage) would no longer be the eternal outsider, the scourge of powerlessness and consequent victimization over the centuries ending on May 14, 1948, with Jews’ re-entry onto the stage of history. Henceforth, the State of Israel’s creation could provide them, as I have written elsewhere, “some solace and even joy in the wake of hitherto unimaginable horror.”⁷ The Jewish character of that commonwealth was open for resolution.

Over the last decade, I have explored how members of the ever beleaguered tribe grappled with their Jewish selves during the twentieth century. Since the viability of a people’s continuance shifted to the United States and the State of Israel after the seismic rupture wrought by the Holocaust, those two new centers of the Jewish experience have commanded the focus of my attention. The studies gathered here offer facets of a dramatic, often troubled, story; transformation and conflict abound. Five of the chapters have been published elsewhere, some undergoing revision and expanded treatment for this collection.

The century’s first pogrom, which broke out in the Bessarabian capital of Kishinev in 1903, became a turning point in Jewish history. Its savagery provoked young Jewish socialist Bundists and Zionists, the latter inspired by a Bialik poem which raged against the degrading “passivity” of Exile, to take up weapons against subsequent attack. Such pioneering Jewish defiance hardly checked the designs of a malevolent Russian autocracy just when the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, the primary source of modern antisemitism, first made its appearance. Most significantly, when conflated with the economic crisis in the northwestern part of the restricted Pale of Settlement, the Kishinev pogrom and its successors triggered a wave of immigration which began in two major directions. More than one million Jews immigrated before World War I to the United States, whose Jewish community joined hands for the first time to provide financial and political support to their kinsmen in the vast Romanov Empire. Some 40,000 also made for Eretz Israel, where they would become

the leaders of the Jewish “state-in-the-making” (chap. 1).

The Land of Promise across the Atlantic, with its unprecedented liberty and prosperity, exerted a corrosive influence on the integrity of Judaism. The Polish-born Abraham Selmanovitz, a stately sage of Torah and Talmud, ably linked his service in the hasidic fastness of Williamsburg with the rabbinical seminary of the emerging Yeshiva University in Washington Heights. Some of his progeny, however, joined the large majority of their Jewish contemporaries in departing the life of *halakha* (law) and prudence for personal achievement and happiness (chap. 2). Felix Frankfurter transferred the loyalties of his own Viennese-Jewish heritage to America; the Harvard Law School; patricians Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., and particularly Franklin D. Roosevelt; and the U.S. Supreme Court. Standing aloof from Jewish affairs once a member of the highest bench in the land, Frankfurter’s anxiety about himself as a Jew crept into some of his most notable Court opinions; this ambivalence remained unresolved to the end (chap. 3).

A small minority, espousing the universal message of prophetic Judaism while insisting that Zionism placed the loyalty of Jews outside of Palestine into question, created the American Council for Judaism. Seared by the Holocaust, American Jewry rejected these fears and united behind the cause of Jewish national rebirth (chap. 4). His insecurities as a Jew led the *New York Times* publisher Arthur Hays Sulzberger to oppose any “Jewish” manifestation other than religious; the world’s newspaper of record deliberately obscured coverage of the systematic slaughter of European Jewry during World War II, and pilloried Zionism until the latter received UN sanction. This admitted agnostic gradually withdrew from contact with Jewish organizations; his grandchildren represented all faiths (chap. 5).

The biblically covenanted Promised Land hugging the Mediterranean’s rim beckoned with the alternative of nationalism, yet this prospect engendered other controversies over identity. While acknowledged as the bard of his people’s *risorgimento*, Hayim Nahman Bialik exercised little influence on developments there. Criticized by a new literary generation and witness to escalating strife between political factions, whose secularized youngsters were estranged from the Judaism upon which he had been nurtured in Russia, Bialik retreated into poetic silence and died an embittered man (chap. 6). Orthodoxy fared no better, the Diaspora-based Agudas Israel organization eventually rejecting an historic overture from the religious-Zionist Mizrahi to join forces for the sake of traditional observance, education, and Eretz Israel activity. With anti-Zionist Aguda elders adhering to a quietist view in the face of mounting

persecution and Mizrahi wishing to bring the Torah dynamically into the realm of practical politics, the impasse on the eve of World War II between the rivals represented a lost opportunity (chap. 7).

The murder of Haim Arlosoroff in 1933 exacerbated a separate, more violent struggle that had begun a few years earlier between Palestine's Left and Right over the nature of the emerging Jewish commonwealth. Labor charged Revisionist-Zionists with killing the political head of the Zionist settlement; the Right, in turn, accused its adversaries of perpetrating a blood libel in order to weaken the militant organization. The unanimous decision by a British court of appeals to free the remaining Revisionist on trial did not convince the Left, then or in later years. A state commission concluded in 1985 that the accused were innocent and that the killers' identity remained a mystery, but the assassination of laborite Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin one decade later by an opponent of the Oslo Accords sharpened the political divide (chap. 8). That divide also found expression in Palestinian Jewry's response to the execution in 1938 of Shlomo Ben-Yosef, the first Jew to be hanged by the British authorities, who attacked an Arab bus in retaliation for incessant terrorism against Jews. Only after the ascent of Menahem Begin to power in 1977 did Ben-Yosef and subsequent gallows victims, all members of the Right's pre-state military groups, enter Israel's pantheon. Their collectivist orientation, foreign to much of the present generation of Israeli-Jewish youth searching for individual identity, fueled a passionate Zionist commitment and its realization (chap. 9).

.....

The issue of authentic Jewish continuity remains, both in Israel and the Diaspora. The personal and collective meanings which its members will ascribe to their Jewish identity elude safe prediction. That dilemma cannot be avoided when life increasingly encourages multiple identities and diverse commitments. Articulate advocates for universalism and for particularity have made their case since the beginning of the modern era. The debate is not concluded. And the grit of history, particularly its malignant and unexpected knots, has to be taken into account.

I have a number of individuals to thank for the appearance of *Twentieth Century Jews*. My late parents of cherished memory, Rabbi Murry S. Penkower and Lillian Stavisky Penkower, first convinced me that fusing continuity and change is possible, even essential, in our time. Yael is the quintessence of an *ezer k'negdo*, while our children and their spouses are constant sources of

much pride and joy. My sisters, brother, and brothers-in-law have always been supportive. Professor Michael Popkin, chair of the Humanities Department at Touro College and a good friend, reviewed the manuscript for clarity of prose. The help of archivists, too numerous to mention, has been invaluable. I take special delight in a few of the untold many who will forge their own Jewish identity as the new century unfolds: Aaron, Rinat, Leah, Bat-Ami, Ra'aya, and Ro'i Penkower; Nachshon, Elisha, Orli, and Maayan Roth; Ariela, Elisheva, Ilana, Chanel, Moriah, Yardena, and Yair Simon; and Ilan and Matan Penkower. To them, with great affection, this volume is dedicated.

Notes

- 1 Winston Churchill coined the phrase when speaking at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Mid-Century Convocation, on March 31, 1949. Upon becoming the Tory Prime Minister in 1951, he resorted to it as well.
- 2 Yuri Slezkine, *The Jewish Century* (Princeton, 2004).
- 3 Hermann Cohen, *Religion of Reason Out of the Sources of Judaism*, S. Kaplan, trans. (New York, 1972), pp. 259-260; Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, W.H. Hallo, trans. (New York, 1970); Lucien Wolf, "Zionism," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, vol. 28 (New York, 1911), pp. 986-989. For Martin Buber's spirited rejoinder to Cohen's assault on Zionism, see *The Jew, Essays from Martin Buber's Journal, Der Jude, 1916-1928*, Arthur A. Cohen, ed. (University, Alabama, 1980), pp. 87-96.
- 4 Slezkine, *The Jewish Century*, p. 164; Thorstein Veblen, "The Intellectual Pre-Eminence of Jews in Modern Europe," *Political Science Quarterly* 34:1 (March 1919), 33-42.
- 5 Karl Shapiro, "Travelogue for Exiles," in *Poems of a Jew* (New York, 1958), p. 18. The italics for the last line are Shapiro's.
- 6 George Eliot, "The Modern Hep! Hep! Hep!," in *Impressions of Theophrastus Such, Miscellaneous Essays*. Illustrated Cabinet Edition (New York, n.d.), pp. 184-213.
- 7 Max Weber, *Ancient Judaism*, H.H. Gerth and D. Martindale, trans. (Glencoe, 1952), p. 3; Monty Noam Penkower, *The Holocaust and Israel Reborn: From Catastrophe to Sovereignty* (Urbana, 1994), p. xii.

The Kishinev Pogrom of 1903

I

AS THE CHURCH BELLS OF KISHINEV PEALD ON APRIL 19, 1903 (APRIL 6 on the Julian calendar), marking the noon hour of Easter Sunday, the first pogrom of the twentieth century began. Initially, young people began hounding Jews to leave Chufinskii square, their cause gradually taken up by adults in an increasing state of holiday drunkenness. Late that afternoon, some twenty-five bands, averaging thirty-fifty each, simultaneously fanned out across the Jewish quarter of Bessarabia's capital, teenage boys taking the lead in smashing the windows of houses and stores. Students and seminarists from the Royal School and the city's religious colleges, iron bars and axes in hand, followed the hooligans; aided by looters, they plundered and demolished property. The local police made no attempt to interfere, Chief of Secret Police Levendal even exhorting the gangs on. A few rioters who were taken into custody were quickly released. Christian homes, differentiated earlier that morning by large chalked crosses, went unscathed. Passing through the streets in his carriage, Orthodox bishop Iakov blessed the mostly Moldavian attackers.

The rampaging mobs of laborers and artisans, finding Governor von Raaben not employing the more than 5,000-man military garrison against them, and seeing many police taking part in the robbery, passed to murder and massacre during the night. Having just celebrated the seventh day of Passover, the city's 50,000 Jews (a third of the population) now fell prey to barbarism. Four who tried to defend 13 Asia St. on Monday were killed; a boy's tongue was cut out while the two-year-old was still alive. A group of 150 Jews in the New Bazaar succeeded in driving away their aggressors until a police officer arrested some of these defenders and broke up the remaining body. Meyer Weissman, blinded in one eye from youth, begged for his life with the offer of sixty rubles; taking this money, the leader of the crowd destroying his small grocery store gouged out Weissman's other eye, saying: "You will never again look upon a Christian child." Nails were driven through heads; bodies hacked in half; bellies split open and filled with feathers. Women and girls were raped, and some had their breasts cut off.

Several policemen and a Jewish member of the fire brigade did drive off

attackers, and some civilians gave Jews shelter, but these responses proved rare. No Russian or Moldavian clergymen, with one solitary exception, performed a similar Christian duty. The better class of the public, the semi-official *Sz. Petersburgskiye Vedomosti* subsequently reported, “walked calmly along and gazed at these horrible spectacles with the utmost indifference.” The savagery of the 1,500-2,000 rioters went on unimpeded until, at 7 p.m. on April 20th, the governor received a telegram from Minister of the Interior Vyacheslav von Plehve to disperse the mob. Within an hour, a large detachment of troops implemented the order. This, in turn, drove crowds to the Bender Rogatka, Skulanska Rogatka, and other suburbs, where they continued their slaughter and violation of Jews until the morning of the 21st, when full martial law came into effect.¹

The results were devastating. According to a memorial album published by Kishinev Jewry that year, the recorded names consisted of thirty-four males (two babies among them) and seven females (including a twelve-year-old) who died during the pogrom itself, followed by another eight who succumbed to their wounds. This number surpassed the total killed in all of the pogroms of 1881. The volume also gave the figure of 495 wounded, ninety-five of them seriously. The number of homeless reached 2,000, with 2.5 million rubles in personal property damage. And even after the pogrom was quashed, a visiting journalist who arrived soon thereafter was particularly impressed that there appeared to be “neither regret nor remorse” among the Gentile citizenry. Almost each evening during his stay, large numbers gathered in the Royal Gardens to enjoy the music of the Dragoon Band, which performed Polish polkas, as well as the Hungarian Chardash and Russian marches, in faultless fashion.²

Yet, until a few years earlier, no clouds foreshadowing such carnage darkened Kishinev’s horizon. Coming under Russian rule in 1818, the city had developed as a commercial and industrial center, attracting Jews from other parts of the vast Romanov Empire. Most of the factories, along with large commercial houses and printing presses, were owned by Jews, and the growing number of Jewish poor received support from a united charitable organization founded by their coreligionists in 1898. The fertile countryside witnessed good relations between Jews and their neighbors (primarily Moldavian) to the extent that when pogroms swept across the whole of southern Russia during 1881-1883, so frequent and furious that the London *Times* called them “a scandal to civilization,” the Bessarabian peasants refused to take part. In the early 1890’s, a prominent police officer harassed the Jews by blackmail, closed the Great Synagogue, and rigorously applied the government’s antisemitic

May Laws of 1882, but the Jewish *kehillah* succeeded in having him removed to another district.³

The arrival of Moldavian nationalist Pavolachi Krushevan on the scene in 1894 dramatically altered this harmonious tableau. Taking control of the region's only daily newspaper, *Bessarabets*, he began inciting the population through a relentless stream of articles bearing titles like "Death to the Jews!", "Down With the Disseminators of Socialism!", and "Crusade Against the Hated Race!" Vice-Governor Ustrugov, in his capacity as official press censor, and Levendal encouraged Krushevan's campaign against Jews, especially those holding municipal office. In 1902, Plehve offered Krushevan a substantial subsidy to run a similar newspaper in St. Petersburg named *Znamya*, which he began publishing in the czarist capital. That same year, Krushevan attempted during Easter time to link Jews to the death of a Christian youth, resorting to the charge of ritual murder. He failed at this libel, an accusation dating from the Middle Ages stating that Jews killed Christians to take blood for ritual ceremonies, only because the guilty individual was quickly identified.⁴

The following year, the murder of a Christian boy in early February at Dubossary, south of Kishinev, coupled with the death of a girl in a Kishinev hospital, enabled Krushevan to renew his effort. Shortly after government emissaries met secretly with Krushevan and provincial officials, a broadside printed on the *Bessarabets* press informed the city's inhabitants that a recent imperial ukase permitted Christians "to execute bloody justice [*krawawaja rasprawwa*] on the Jews during the three holy days of Easter." Most novel, the crusading antisemitic editor had his confederates distribute copies of "The Rabbis' Speech," a pamphlet first published in St. Petersburg in 1872, in which twelve Jewish elders were depicted meeting once a year in a Prague cemetery in their resolve to conquer the world. Although later evidence would prove that an uncle had murdered the boy and the girl had committed suicide, *Bessarabets* rushed to call for vengeance against the Jews of Kishinev. A few days before April 19, 1903, a sizeable group of armed Albanians and some Moldavians arrived there by train.⁵

With open discussion in the city of an approaching pogrom, the chief rabbi implored Bishop Iakov to announce that the Church had long opposed the blood libel charge. The metropolitan replied that he thought some Jews did practice ritual murder, and he refused to intervene. On April 17, a delegation of Jewish leaders warned Raaben that Krushevan's incitement would lead to murder. The governor assured his visitors that all necessary steps had been taken to maintain order. In fact, he did nothing. Chief of Police Tchemzenkov,

asked to curb *Bessarabets's* activities, replied: it would "serve the Jews right."⁶ And the pogrom came.

Jewish community elders, led by Jacob Bernstein-Kohan, managed to send cables abroad about the slaughter, requested succor, and pressed for an official investigation. The Yiddish press of New York City's Lower East Side, home to 500,000 East European Jews, carried full accounts every day starting April 27. Two days later, the executive boards of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the Independent Order of B'nai Brith informed U.S. Secretary of State John Hay of their wish to send supplies and ascertain the facts. St. Petersburg at first denied the massacre but, in the face of overwhelming evidence from the *London Standard* and other reports, had its ambassador in Washington, D.C., blame the victims by announcing that "the Jews ruin the peasants, with the result that conflicts occur."⁷

On May 18, the London *Times* published a letter that Plehve wrote to the governor twelve days before the pogrom began, advising that he take no strong action. The Russian government declared the document a forgery; Plehve publicly asserted that the trouble had begun after a Jewish carousel owner hit a Christian woman: the Jews countered with weapons and killed one Gentile, sparking popular passion against the Jews. (A later pre-trial examination revealed the interior minister's explanation to be bogus.) Although no conclusive proof surfaced as to the letter's authenticity, Plehve's past record of encouraging antisemitic activity and his slow response to the escalating pogrom presented, as one historian has concluded, "a strong case for negligent homicide."⁸

Some of Russia's intelligentsia denounced what Tolstoi, who had been silent about the pogroms of 1881-1883, termed the "horrible events in Kishinev." While condemning the criminals responsible and the government that, with its clergy and "bandit horde" of officials, "keeps the people in a state of ignorance and fanaticism," he advised the Jews to adopt "virtuous living." A collection of essays, *Skornik*, as a fund-raiser for the victims was edited by Maxim Gorki, who railed against the killers and instigators and called on men of conscience to help Russia's Jews. Vladimir Korolenko, the liberal author who had already protested his countrymen's antisemitism since the 1880s, described in harrowing detail what he saw and heard in the city two months after the butchery in "House No. 13" on Asia St., which could not yet hide "a huge crimson patch mixed with bits of glass, mortar, bricks, and feathers." These responses circulated widely underground in Russia, as well as abroad.⁹

Far more worrisome to the Romanov government was the outcry that

swelled in major Western countries. Large protest meetings were held in Paris and London; Denmark, Italy, and Belgium sponsored relief campaigns. The dispatches for William Randolph Hearst's *New York American* of the famous Irish nationalist Michael Davitt, who reached Kishinev in mid-May, had a marked effect on molding public opinion. Responding to a call from the Alliance Israelite Universelle, German-born Jewish magnates Oscar Straus, Jacob Schiff, and Cyrus L. Sulzberger in New York raised a relief fund of \$100,000 by June, a quarter of the total sum collected worldwide. Across the United States, seventy-seven public meetings were held, with ex-president Grover Cleveland addressing a Carnegie Hall rally against the "wholesale murder" of defenseless human beings "who have been tacitly, if not expressly, assured of safety, under the protection of a professedly civilized government."¹⁰

On May 23, Plehve categorically refused a Jewish delegation's request that he condemn the pogrom and seriously revise the government's anti-Jewish legislation, but the West's indignation fueled some change. The Russian autocracy replaced Raaban at the month's end with the fair-minded Prince Serge D. Urussov. The vice-governor found himself shifted to Tiflis (which would witness a massacre against Armenians a half a year later), while the police chief was dismissed outright. An attempt to renew disorder near Kishinev's market place was promptly scotched by the military garrison, which arrested forty instigators. The interior minister also sent the director of the police department to investigate. And, in announcing that trials of the rioters would commence, Minister Murawiev declared that "justice will take its course."¹¹

These steps did not halt a B'nai Brith delegation from meeting with Secretary Hay and President Theodore Roosevelt on June 15, armed with a protest for dispatch to Czar Nicholas II. Taking note that "race and religious prejudice" had stirred riots that the local Kishinev authorities failed to suppress, exciting "horror and reprobation throughout the world," the petitioners advised that "millions of Russian subjects" were in "constant dread of fresh outbreaks." Hay deplored the "cruel outrages" inflicted against the Bessarabian Jews but urged caution. Roosevelt, on the other hand, announced for the record that he had never known of "a more immediate or a deeper expression of sympathy for the victims of horror over the appalling calamity that has occurred." Also eager to reprimand Russia because of her machinations in Manchuria, the chief executive suggested in mid-July that the petition be sent to the American chargé at St. Petersburg, who would ask whether the document would be accepted. Two days later, Hay heard that Russia would neither receive nor consider the petition. The original was then circulated throughout the United

States, garnering nearly 13,000 signatures, and ultimately ended up as a bound volume in the archives of the State Department.¹²

Theodor Herzl, leader of the World Zionist Organization, could not do with petitions. Having wired the Kishinev Jewish community of his shock at this “great national tragedy,” the movement’s herald felt compelled to seek an answer to Kishinev with a significant overture from Plehve. Personal efforts to secure a charter from the Ottoman Empire’s sultan for mass Jewish settlement in Palestine had achieved nothing, and Great Britain just retreated from an offer for large refuge in the Sinai Peninsula’s El-Arish. One month after the pogrom, Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain repeated to Herzl’s representative the proposal of a colony in East Africa holding at least one million Jews, citing celebrated author Israel Zangwill’s public embrace of this center as “an admirable beginning” in light of Russian Jewry’s calamity. But as Plehve held the key to any wide-scale exit, Herzl sought a meeting by conveying to him that “despair is beginning to take hold of the Jews of Russia,” with the youth “drawn to the ranks of revolution.” Indeed, on June 24, fearing that Zionism had directed itself toward “strengthening the Jewish national idea” and urging “the organization of Jews in closed societies,” the interior minister ordered all its meetings and collections prohibited. Then, hearing from an intimate contact that Herzl had “a plan for organized emigration without re-entry,” Plehve finally agreed to accord the Zionist an interview.¹³

Fully conscious, as he had earlier written an American statesman, of the “seven million outlawed human beings who have again begun to tremble”,¹⁴ Herzl prepared at the beginning of August 1903 for perhaps his most decisive journey. Physically ailing and anxious over the mounting restrictions that confronted his acolytes in Russia, the forty-three-year-old lawyer departed Vienna for his first trip to the heartland of world Jewry. Perhaps the czarist regime, if persuaded that the Zionist objective of mass migration could aid in checking radicalism’s advance, might help influence Constantinople to grant the elusive charter. Ahead was an arduous trip to St. Petersburg and a bureaucracy rife with Judeophobes, none more influential than Plehve himself.

II

For the majority of Russia’s Jews, Kishinev represented yet another episode in their people’s historic misfortune. Yiddish poet Shimon Frug’s very popular “Hut Rahmones,” printed on the front page of St. Petersburg’s daily *Fraynd*

in April, reflected the common perception about “streams of blood and rivers of tears” shed across the ages and concluded: “Have pity! Give shrouds for the dead and for the living – bread.” Other poets recalled past martyrologies, such as David Frishman’s “Daniel in the Lion’s Den,” with its last Hebrew lines: “Should you leap on me, tear me/ content would I die/ Knowing that at least/ They were the beasts of the forest that did it.” A miscellany entitled *Hilf* (Help) by Warsaw’s *Yidishe Folkstoytung*, seeking funds and support within Russian society, carried stories by Shalom Aleichem (Shalom Rabinovitz) and Mendele Moher Seforim (Shalom Yankov Abrahmovitz) which offered slight comfort to readers. Three parables by Tolstoi and a Korolenko sentimental offering for this collection contributed in like vein.¹⁵

Not so the Jewish Socialist Bund of Russia and Poland, an anti-Zionist and anti-Orthodox organization first created in 1897, which asserted that only the overthrow of capitalism, a system fostering class conflict and ethnic hostility, would end dictatorial czardom. The hated regime, it averred, employed antisemitism as a tool against the revolutionary spirit that was sweeping the empire. The Bund’s April manifesto decried the consoling response of fellow Jewish writers, particularly Frug’s standard lines: “How weak is our hand to do battle, how great and heavy is our woe.” It called for answering “violence with violence,” rather than submissively await salvation from God, friends, government, or other quarters. Ignoring the fact that workers and the educated class had supported the pogrom, the Bund concluded with a cry for “international proletarian solidarity.”¹⁶

Some non-Marxist Jewish youngsters, assuming, as did the Bund, that the Kishinev Jews had meekly reacted to the mob, also rushed to call for self-defense against future attack. Socialist-Zionist ideologue Nahum Syrkin wrote an article in Yiddish urging fellow Jews to go out to the street with weapons in hand. Poalei Zion activist Michael Helpern, under the rallying cry “remember the shame,” organized Jewish fighting groups in Vilna and other towns. In Kiev, nineteen-year-old Pinhas Dashevsky, with two other left-wing Zionist student friends, authored a letter calling for resistance. Not long thereafter, Dashevsky traveled to St. Petersburg with the intention of killing Krushevan in revenge for the pogrom. The stab wound on the instigator’s neck was so minor that Krushevan returned home, refusing to receive treatment from a Jewish pharmacy nearby. In his trial, Dashevsky claimed that his people’s national honor was at stake. Behind closed doors, the court handed down the stringent sentence of hard labor in prison. Of the five-year term, Dashevsky served two for an act which electrified his contemporaries.¹⁷

When the first news of the pogrom reached Odessa, Vladimir Jabotinsky, then a precocious journalist, was delivering a lecture on Leo Pinsker's *Autoemancipation!* (1882) before the local Jewish literary society. Earlier, hearing rumors of an impending pogrom in Kishinev, Jabotinsky and some other youngsters had gathered pistols and printed forms declaring the legality of self-defense. The report to the club now by several survivors dramatically corroborated his reassertion of that classic treatise's response to the pogroms of twenty years earlier, Pinsker having called for an immediate territorial solution to aid the powerless Jewish people. While Jabotinsky would set out to distribute funds and clothing in Kishinev, the society's senior members agreed upon the date for a meeting to formulate their own response to the tragedy.¹⁸

None of the shocked group appeared as agitated as Ahad Ha'am (Asher Ginsberg), whose advocacy of cultural Zionism had long found him at sharp odds with Herzl's emphasis on political statehood. "The killing in Kishinev has completely filled my heart and I cannot think of anything else," he wrote to Joseph Klausner, a protégé and his successor as editor of *HaShiloah* in Warasw. The Jewish delegations seeking help from St. Petersburg were "slaves," Ahad Ha'am informed another correspondent, "defiled by persecution that reinforces their self-contempt." If there were still "men among us," he went on, "they must come together and raise a new flag, the flag of inner freedom, the flag of personal honor."¹⁹ Understandably, the distinguished circle asked this gifted essayist to draft a public manifesto in Hebrew that each would endorse.

Although Ahad Ha'am's proclamation began by recalling the deadly pogroms carried out under Ukrainian leaders Bogdan Chmielnicki (1648) and Ivan Gonta (1768), it stressed that the current oppressive government laws convince "the rabble that a Jew is not human...and his blood is unaccounted for." Local officials side with their countrymen; judges are not immune from "the hatred and contempt that they feel toward Jews." Then came the crux of his indictment: "It is a disgrace for five million human souls to unload themselves on others, to stretch their necks to slaughter and cry for help, without as much as attempting to defend their own property, honor and lives." Rather than take the traditional recourse to tears and supplications, Jews had to realize that "only the one who can defend his honor is honored by others." A permanent organization in all communities was needed to stand guard against the enemy, and should not the regime permit us "the natural right of every living creature to defend itself inasmuch as it is able?" A general assembly must be convened to have the main Jewish communities in the land consider other weighty issues, such as giving order to an emigration that inevitably

would increase more than ever in the foreseeable future. Thus wrote Ahad Ha'am, whose name was joined by historian Simon Dubnow, writer Ben-Ami (Hayim Rabinovich, who had organized a Jewish student self-defense unit in that city in 1881), editor Yehoshua Ravnitski, and the young poet Hayim Nahman Bialik.²⁰

As it turned out, the proclamation was issued two weeks later under the auspices of a non-existent Agudat Sofrim Ivrim (Hebrew Writers' League). The decision, made while Ahad Ha'am was on a business trip for the Wissotsky tea firm, infuriated him. As he wrote to Ravnitski from Rostov-on-the-Don in June, the group had no right to do so without consulting him first. In his view, the anonymity of the composers destroyed whatever value the circular might have had. His less uncompromising colleagues, fearing that a signed call for self-defense would provoke the regime further against the empire's Jews, opted to send the manifesto that same month to about 100 communities in the (unlikely) hope that it elude police surveillance.²¹

For his part, Dubnow penned an essay the following month, later to appear as the ninth letter of his *Essays on Old and New Judaism*. Entitled "A Historic Moment: The Question of Emigration," the generation's preeminent Jewish historian noted that the new pogroms had engraved the watchword of "self-help" in flaming letters on the Jewish nation. The partial transfer of Jewry's greatest center from Eastern Europe to North America he realized to be a "living and permanent fact" – indeed, "the most important event in contemporary Jewish history." Accordingly, Dubnow called for a central committee to oversee the shift in dense masses of this Russian diaspora to uncrowded population areas, even while Jewry sought to improve economic conditions and civic rights in the old centers of Europe. To these ends, he argued, a general Jewish congress had to be convened in the near future. He concluded with the prayer that all who strove for the preservation and revival of the Jewish people would unite "over the fresh blood of our new national martyrs!"²²

Dubnow's Odessa colleagues had also decided to gather as much data as possible about the pogrom, to be brought both as evidence in the Russian trials of the killers and before the bar of history. Disseminated abroad, this information might exert pressure on St. Petersburg to check its antisemitic legislation and could also raise relief funds in the West. Certainly aware that Rav Yitshak Elhanan Spektor of Kovno had undertaken a pioneering effort in similar vein to alert the world successfully to the pogroms of 1881, Dubnow pressed for a thorough collection of facts. Photographs had to be taken and statistics amassed, the eye-witness testimony of survivors and of Gentiles

written down in detail. A series of topics had to be addressed, including the extent of help received from non-Jews, the exact damage done, if Jews had defended themselves, and the identity of those responsible. To undertake this mission on behalf of the Kishinev Historical Commission, which he headed, Dubnow suggested the most junior of their circle, Bialik.²³

It was an inspired choice, indeed. Bialik was hailed by Klausner as “the poet of the national renaissance” when his inaugural volume of Hebrew poems appeared in 1901, and his first published poem, “El HaTsipor” (1892), had contrasted the tears and sighs of Exile with the hope and joy of Zion. He was deeply influenced by Ahad Ha’am’s effort to replace Jewry’s fading religious loyalties with a philosophically oriented humanist rationale for its existence, and Bialik’s “Al Saf Bet HaMedrash” and “HaMatmid” reflected the ex-Volozhin yeshiva student’s anguished sense that only a spark remained of the sacred Torah fire of old. With traditionalist society personally deemed melancholy and moribund, he metamorphosed the builders of Eretz Israel into priests and Temple builders (“Birkat Am”), and angrily reproached Jewish apathy to the rising Zionist movement (“Akhen Hatsir HaAm”) in his first self-styled “Poem of Wrath.” Despairing of contemporary Jewish life (“Al Levavkhem HaShamem”), Bialik recalled the legend (“M’tai Midbar”) that the generation of the exodus from Egypt awakens periodically to utter defiance against the Divine decree consigning them to a state of living death, and suggested the urgent need to fight for a people’s redemption.²⁴ Not surprisingly, the thirty-year-old accepted Dubnow’s summons without hesitation.

On the eve of his departure for Kishinev, Bialik penned an initial reaction to the pogrom, “Al HaShehita.” The original title of “Upon the Slaughter,” later changed to “A Plea for Mercy” (“Bakashat Rahamim”) in order to pass state censorship for publication, implied that the defenseless victim pronounced upon himself the traditional blessing uttered by the ritual slaughterer before slitting an animal’s throat. Boldly assuming the prophetic voice, the poet’s raging twenty-eight lines expect nothing from Divine justice. Mercy’s availability in heaven is doubtful, and retribution on earth futile: “Vengeance for the blood of little children/ The devil has not framed.” Rather, the author ends his second Poem of Wrath with a curse that “to the gloomy depths the blood will worm its way/ Devour in darkness and grow upon the earth’s foundations.”²⁵

What Bialik saw in Kishinev, he told Bernstein-Kohan years later, almost drove him mad. Aided by a local Hebrew teacher, Pesah Auerbakh, he investigated the pogrom in painstaking detail. For more than a month,

he collected documents, took photographs of the dead and of desecrated Torah scrolls, got people who suffered to talk to him. Working in a state of mounting internal tension, as recalled by Yisrael Berman, a youth who escorted him about, the poet filled up four large notebooks of almost 200 pages. Certain that the volume projected by the Historical Commission would greatly help the victims, Bialik then retired to his father-in-law's home in the Kiev district to prepare the manuscript. According to Dubnow's exacting instructions that July, he was to draw a picture of the entire event until the present, and send the documents as "*pieces justificatives*" for subsequent publication by the commission. A committee centered in St. Petersburg would prepare the final book, along with an introduction to place the massacre in historical context.²⁶

Instead, Bialik sat down to compose the long narrative poem for which he is best remembered today, "B'ir HaHareiga" ("In the City of Slaughter"). Mastering the Hebrew language in all its layers, from the biblical, to the talmudic, to the modern, this anti-epic surveyed the ruins in gruesome scene after scene. The indifference of nature pains the prophet-author's soul first: "And calmly like today and yesterday, / The sun will rise tomorrow in the East / Its splendor not diminish in the least." Far more arresting is his acerbic description of cowardly descendants of the Maccabees ("It was the flight of mice they fled, / The scurrying of roaches was their flight; / They died like dogs, and they were dead!"), who viewed from hiding the agonies of their loved ones and did not resist, commit suicide, or go mad from anguish. Husbands rushed off to the rabbi to ask whether they could sleep with ravaged wives. Displaying their wounds, survivors beg for charity, as of old, instead of rebelling against their fate.

Astonishingly, it becomes clear that God Himself is the speaker of the poem. Confessing that "I have fallen from My high estate," the Almighty intones: "Your dead were vainly dead; and neither I nor you / Know why you died or wherefore, for whom, nor by what laws; / Your deaths are without reason; your lives are without cause." The terrible question arises: "For great is the anguish, great the shame on the brow; / But which of these is greater? – son of man, say thou!" Ultimately, He calls on the prophet to "demand the retribution for the shamed / of all the centuries and every age! / Let fists be flung like stone / against the heavens and the heavenly Throne!" Devoid of the hope and comfort offered hitherto by Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and other predecessors, the contemporary prophet can only end his scroll of agony by fleeing into the wilderness, stormy winds swallowing up his cry of rage.²⁷

This anti-epic transformed Kishinev, to use David Roskies's phrase, "into a crucible of heaven and earth." God has abdicated His throne, and His Chosen People remain equally passive and powerless. The enemy consigned here almost to oblivion, Bialik chose, as well, to make no mention of the evidence about sporadic Jewish self-defense that his own notebooks documented. For the sake of a "higher truth," the poet's deliberate effort to shock informed Kishinev with iconographic import, implying to his readers that the Jewish archetypal responses of mourning and Divine retribution had to be radically altered in the face of recurrent violence. A censor's cut of imagined subversive lines and a change of title to "The Oracle at Nemirov," allowing for publication in St. Petersburg's *HaZeman* at the year's end, hardly fooled readers. If anything, the new title resonated strongly, linking the pogrom with the Chmielnicki massacre in June 1648 of some 6,000 Jews in Nemirov and, in particular, with the perfidy of Gentile rulers who, as now, conspired with the killers.²⁸

"In the City of Slaughter" drew immediate praise. "You have attained the uppermost peak of Hebrew poetry, a greatly agitated Klausner wrote Bialik, "and perhaps of poetry in general." Ya'akov Mazeh, the state-appointed rabbi of Moscow, promptly announced that this "vision" should replace the traditional lamentations said in synagogues on the anniversary of the Nemirov pogrom. Jabotinsky observed that a poem of such quality provided the best reason to learn Hebrew, which he followed up with lessons from his former teacher Ravnitski while writing a preface in poem form to his own Russian translation, an incitement to armed rebellion. To Yosef Hayim Brenner, soon to be the honest, skeptical voice of the Second Aliya to Palestine (1904-1914), this and Bialik's two earlier Poems of Wrath signaled an encouraging "sign of renaissance."²⁹

The Hebrew press did not pay the poem much attention at first, perhaps out of fear of censorship or preoccupation with other events soon to crowd the newspaper columns. Not so Russian Jewish youngsters, whose grasp of its pathbreaking significance was eloquently remembered by Yisrael Berman: "Each and every word was like a skewer of white hot iron, each and every line a consuming fire.... The chisel of his language had broken open the Jew's closed, sorrowing heart, injecting it with an ancient spirit of heroism and energy." "B'Ir HaHareiga," especially after the author himself provided a Yiddish translation to reach the masses, became their rallying cry for action.³⁰ Before long, Kishinev as modern symbol of national shame – created pitilessly by Bialik – would be countered with mounting agitation for Jewish self-defense.

III

While Bialik was drafting his singular elegy, Herzl brought his own case for reasoned diplomacy to Plehve. In their first meeting, on August 8, this included a request for intervention with the sultan in order to secure a charter for colonization in Palestine; financial aid for large emigration, with money raised from Jewish funds and taxes; and facilitation of Russian Zionist organizational work. Agreeing to all three points without hesitation, the Russian minister asked for a summary and an outline of what his guest intended to say at the forthcoming Zionist Congress. On August 14, Plehve gave Herzl a letter, approved by Nicholas II, stating that the Zionists could count on the government's "moral and material assistance with respect to the measures taken by the movement which would lead to the diminution of the Jewish population in Russia." This pledge, as well as intervention with Constantinople and a possible audience for Herzl with the czar, came with a barely veiled warning: all rested on what happened at the congress. "Thus everything depends upon our people committing no stupidities," confided the Zionist chief to his diary.³¹

"We must give an answer to Kishineff," Herzl had written associate Max Nordau in July, and the offer of Uganda in East Africa "is the only one.... We must, in a word, play the politics of the hour." Great Britain's official proposal and Plehve's formal communication, the latter given apparent value by the tumultuous reception that "sorely oppressed" Jews in Vilna accorded Herzl as he traveled westward from St. Petersburg, he brought before the Sixth Zionist Congress on August 22. His opening speech, consequently, included this hortatory appeal: "Kishinev exists wherever Jews undergo bodily or spiritual torture, wherever their self-respect is injured and their property despoiled because they are Jews. Let us save those who can still be saved!" The East Africa project (actually a district east of the Mau Mau escarpment in what is today Kenya) Herzl presented as "only an auxiliary colonization – but, be it noted, on a national and state foundation." Palestine, he declared, remained the unchanged goal.³²

The 596 delegates gathered in Basle converted the congress debate into a question of principle – Palestine or Uganda? Nordau defended the British offer as "*ein Nachtasyl*," a temporary night shelter in which hundreds of thousands of hard-pressed Jews would educate themselves and the world to the idea that "we Jews are a people capable, willing and ready to take upon

ourselves all those tasks which characterize an honorable and independent people." Various federations (led by the German), supported by a majority of the Mizrachi religious Zionists, Socialists like Syrkin, and individual Russians close to Herzl, endorsed his request for a commission to investigate Uganda's settlement potential. The Russian representatives, however, among them those from Kishinev, were furious that he had met the hated Plehve, and remained unalterably opposed to any negotiation other than for Palestine. Following the 295-177 vote in favor of the commission, the "negatives" walked out of the hall, some weeping on the floor as if in the mourning rites of Tisha B'Av. A temporary compromise was reached with these self-styled "Zionists of Zion," but Herzl had gained a Pyrrhic victory. On August 31, physically and spiritually exhausted, and keenly aware of the decisive split in the movement, he informed friends Nordau, Zangwill, and Joseph Cowen that by the Seventh Zionist Congress, "if I am still alive," "I shall have Palestine, or else I shall have recognized the complete futility of all further effort in that direction."³³

Even as the despairing man spoke, his anxiety about the on-going threat to Russian Jewry's existence received immediate corroboration in Gomel (Homel), the scene of the next major pogrom. The familiar opening signal "Beat the Yids!" ("Bei zhidov!") was heard on August 29; looting and pogrom ensued for four days against the city's 20,000 Jews, then half of the population. This time, however, lightly armed Bundists and left-wing Poalei Zion groups organized to meet the assaults. Police and troops punished the defenders, whose robust effort greatly minimized property losses and kept the number of Jewish victims down to a dozen (alongside eight Christian rioters). Aware of this activist shift in mood, the governor of Mogilev Province lost little time in publicly blaming the Jews. Thirty-six were brought to trial, together with some pogromists, and the czar received an official report about the Jews' "aggressive and insubordinate behavior."³⁴

The Kishinev and Gomel pogroms, with others in Smiela, Rovno, and Sosnowiec that same year, increasingly reinforced Jewish alienation from the Russian state – and justifiably so. The autocracy, which did not discourage such assaults and blamed the victims, implicitly abandoned its old distinction between "useful" and "useless" Jews. The unequivocally antisemitic Nicholas II turned down any cabinet recommendation for abolishing Jewish disabilities, including higher education and living in the restrictive Pale of Settlement, and informed his minister of war that the Jews (vulgarly referred to invariably as *zhidy*) deserved the "lesson" of Kishinev because of their revolutionary activities. Urussov's candid memoirs speak of "a malevolent attitude toward

the Jews” that was manifested in the highest court circles after Kishinev. No longer limited to the governor-general of Moscow, Raaben’s successor reminisced, this hostile feeling was also entertained by the czar’s immediate family. All efforts to induce the latter to condemn the Kishinev pogrom, or even to give vent to some sympathy by granting the sufferers material aid, “met with complete failure.”³⁵

Plehve soon dismissed the idea of persuading Constantinople to let Jews enter Palestine, considering political Zionism a “chimera” in light of strong Turkish opposition.³⁶ He still wished to encourage Zionist ideas in Russia, he informed Anglo-Jewish publicist Lucien Wolf that October, because such involvement would make Jews less receptive to Socialist influence. He “fully appreciated the gravity of the Jewish question,” the interior minister went on, the difficulty being much greater with the lower class of Jews because of their poverty and lack of Russian education. Before treating the question of education, means had to be found for them to earn a living. Jews could not be permitted to live outside of the Pale, Plehve asserted, and he was considering expanding the areas where they could reside.³⁷

The trial of the Kishinev rioters made government intentions obvious. Plehve insisted on closed doors, lest the truth be disclosed. The president of the court ruled out any discussion of pre-pogrom incitement and preparations, and, to minimize the importance of the trial, decided that it should be conducted as one involving twenty-two separate cases. No officials stood charged. Government attorneys who handled the prosecution in good faith were hampered at every turn; almost all resigned. After this, the examination of the numerous Jewish witnesses became a mere farce. The few convictions handed down were quite nominal, at most a few years at hard labor. Claims for compensation were rejected; Jews were told that their losses had been met many times over in relief contributions from Russia and especially the West.³⁸

Krushevan, the prime instigator who never came to trial, printed a shortened version of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* in his newspaper *Znamya* from August 26 to September 7. Thus the public first encountered the most famous and infamous source of modern antisemitism. In January 1904, Krushevan published the “rabbi’s speech,” purportedly about Jewish designs for world conquest, in the same newspaper without revealing who gave him the manuscript. The same version but no longer truncated would later appear in the form of a booklet that was likely edited by another Bessarabian, Krushevan’s close associate G. V. Butmi. Receiving the approval of the St. Petersburg Censorship Committee, it was published on December 9, 1905.

Butmi and Krushevan also helped in building up the radical monarchist Union of Russian People and its terrorist arm, the “Black Hundreds,” whose insignia the czar wore proudly on his chest. A different edition appeared by the mystic Sergei Nilus, one of the imperial court’s favorites. A somewhat revised and enlarged edition of Nilus’s work in 1917 would become “a force in world history,” but it was Krushevan, with government sanction, who had first published the “Protocols” and its demonological view of Jews and Judaism.³⁹

Kishinev set certain patterns, as well, for the pogroms that erupted across Russia during the next three years. Again and again, Jews fell prey to effective antisemitic press agitation, local official encouragement, police support, limited action taken against *pogromshchiki*, and a central government taking the role of bystander, all the while accusing the Jews of being responsible. In all, twenty-five localized pogroms followed the Kishinev example. From September until December 1904, reservists disgruntled by the country’s unpopular and failing war against Japan, and encouraged by a press that sought to shift the blame from the regime to the Jews, instigated a second wave of twenty-four pogroms. (Though accused of evading the draft and conspiring against Mother Russia, 33,000 Jews were, in fact, fighting and dying in Manchuria for the Romanov Empire – 6.6 percent of the czarist force, although constituting only 4 percent of Russia’s population.) An attempt to unite different Jewish political parties for self-defense quickly collapsed when the police arrested Poalei Zion activists on their way to the conference. Given this oppressive reality, Russian-born Arthur Ruppin concluded his pathbreaking sociological study *Die Juden der Gegenwart* (1904) with the following declaration: “Zionism is not merely a national or chauvinist caprice, but the last desperate stand of the Jews against annihilation.”⁴⁰

The beginning of the 1905 Revolution against the Romanov tyranny, initiated in response to the “Bloody Sunday” in January when troops fired on thousands who had marched on the Winter Palace to petition Nicholas II, unleashed a third phase of violence against Jews. Twenty-two pogroms, the most serious in Kiev, Lodz, and Zhitomir, took place between January and September. The Black Hundreds, encouraged by a czar who wrote his mother that “nine-tenths of the troublemakers are Jews, the People’s whole anger turned against them. That’s how the pogroms happened,” declared as its program the annihilation of the Jews in Russia.⁴¹

The number of attacks rose dramatically after Nicholas issued a manifesto on October 17, 1905, which granted the people a parliament, or Duma. One day later, antisemitic assaults broke out in more than 300 cities, most lasting an entire week, which, Dubnow wrote, “in its horrors, finds no parallel in

the entire history of humanity.” The worst occurred in Odessa, where over 300 Jews were killed. With the pogrom of June 1906 in Bialystok and that in Siedlce three months later (both carried out by the army and the czarist secret police) ending the deadly wave, the number of pogroms came to 657, according to Shlomo Lambroza’s count. Since October, almost 3,000 (at least one-fourth women) out of the empire’s 4.89 million Jews had been murdered, and 2,000 had been seriously wounded. Some 1,500 children were orphaned, 800 losing one parent. The destruction of property caused by the pogroms of 1903-1906 is estimated to be 57.84 million rubles within the Pale and an additional 8.2 million rubles outside it. And few could have any illusions about the government’s increasing role in the pogroms, most dramatically challenged by Urussov in a speech to the Duma in mid-1906.⁴²

This excessive violence demanded a response from Russian Jewry. The religiously Orthodox argued that survival depended on submission, whereas the Zionist movement had supported widespread emigration ever since the pogroms of 1881. After Kishinev, however, armed organizations numbering hundreds of students were created in Gomel, Dnepropetrovsk, Kiev, Shklov, Berdichev, Chudnov, Stolpce, Vilna, Warsaw, Minsk, and Rostov-on-the-Don. “B’Ir HaHareiga” convinced Yitshak Ben-Zvi and other Poalei Zion activists in Poltava, joined by assimilated Jewish youngsters, not to go “like sheep to the slaughter.” The Bund consistently advocated armed resistance, and its successful cooperative effort with Poalei Zion during the May 1905 pogrom in Zhitomir won over many converts. Odessa’s 302 dead included fifty-five who had fought their attackers. In 1905 alone, Jewish labor parties and their military units could be found in forty-two cities; thirty of these went into action. Brenner’s prose piece “*Hu Amar La*” caught the prevailing mood, speaking of the young generation’s insistence on self-defense for the sake of “vengeance and honor,” rather than emulating their fathers’ craven hiding or relying on either God or the authorities for protection from attack.⁴³

The Kishinev outrage almost certainly had a related effect on another Jew, Yevno Azef. This increasingly well-paid agent of the secret police during the previous twelve years had found his way into the inner circle of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party. He helped organize most of the major acts of terrorism against the regime, even as he delivered up to his paymasters some of his most active fellow conspirators. Radical groups like that party seized upon Kishinev to portray the czarist regime as a criminal force, making it easier to gain disenchanted recruits, to obtain funds, and to justify acts of terror and sedition as “revolutionary justice.” Azef helped organize an attempt against

the life of Plehve, so widely identified then as the author of the Kishinev pogrom. The conspirators succeeded in July 1904.⁴⁴

Self-defense and assassination could not check, much less halt, the sustained savagery. The empire's threatened Jews and a few Gentile supporters were no match for the Black Hundreds, Cossacks, police, troops, and Russian officialdom. When the Bund began calling for armed revolution, an intimidated Jewish community gradually withdrew support. Nor did the Russian Social-Democratic Workers' Party, now under the thumb of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, applaud the Bund's emphasis on national-cultural autonomy to serve the Jewish proletariat masses. In classic Marxist ideology, antisemitism was viewed as yet another cursed bourgeois phenomenon that would diminish as the class struggle ended with the victory of the workers. For its part, the Menshevik newspaper *Iskra* played down Bundist and Zionist resistance to the *pogromshchiki*, greatly exaggerating the help offered Jews by undefined (but, by clear implication, non-Jewish) workers. Nor did liberal and progressive circles speak out against the pogroms, except to label them "counterrevolutionary," or protest that the October 1905 manifesto conspicuously avoided mention of Jews when promising rights for all. Dubnow concluded that Jews should be wary of any illusion that major differences would exist between the "old Russia" and the "new."⁴⁵

Across the Atlantic, at the same time, American Jewry's response weighed in the balance. An angry Jacob Schiff, whose Kuhn, Loeb firm had become one of the two most powerful private investment banking houses in the United States, backed a bond issue of \$200 million for Japan during its war with Russia and consistently prevented other firms from underwriting loans to the antisemitic czarist regime. When Count Sergius Witte came to America for negotiations to end the Russo-Japanese War, a Jewish delegation including Schiff and Oscar Straus warned Nicholas II's finance minister in September 1905 that his country's refusal to grant Jews equal rights endangered Russian goodwill in the United States. Once President Roosevelt had secured the Treaty of Portsmouth, ending the war and gaining himself the Nobel Peace Prize, he prodded Witte to recognize U.S. passports when issued to Jewish citizens. One day before sailing for home, Witte met again with Straus and two colleagues and promised to do all he could to relieve the situation of Russia's Jews.⁴⁶

News of the October pogroms galvanized Schiff, Straus, and Sulzberger to work in tandem with British Jewish leaders Nathan Rothschild and Samuel Montagu for a far more intense popular drive than that of 1903. (The Rothschild banking house, like that of Kuhn, Loeb, also refused to float

Russian loans.) Thirty-nine pogrom orphans were placed in private homes across the country as well. In addition, a Jewish Defense Organization, headed by young Judah Magnes, then secretary of the Federation of American Zionists, was quickly formed of all groups; on December 4, some 200,000 marched to New York City's Union Square to hear speeches on self-defense. This joint venture petered out, Bundists and Zionists unable to maintain unity, but the American Jewish Committee (AJC) was formed in 1906 by "uptown" German-born philanthropists like Schiff to "prevent infringement of the civil and religious rights of Jews and to alleviate the consequences of persecution." And under Sulzberger's direction, an estimated \$4 million was collected in the United States by September 1906 through the National Committee for Relief of Sufferers by Russian Massacres and sent to Russia for distribution.⁴⁷

Roosevelt, though deeply sympathetic, did not think that Washington could do anything to relieve the plight of Russia's Jews. Diplomatic intervention, he replied to an entreaty from Schiff, would only harm them at a time when the Romanov dynasty faced political revolution and social chaos. The United States had not gone to war against Turkey on behalf of the Armenians some years before, he observed, and was not prepared to do so against Russia now. At the same time, Roosevelt chose Straus in early 1906 to be his secretary of commerce and labor, telling the first Jew to join a presidential cabinet that he was wanted not only because of ability and character, but because it would be a clear indication to Russia and other antisemitic countries of the president's sentiments.⁴⁸

Nicholas II and his court could not be oblivious to these and related developments. The resounding defeat by Japan, awarding that rising Asian power a preponderant interest in Korea, patently exposed Russia's weaknesses just at a time of growing American imperialism and influence. At least as significantly, the royal dictatorship came to understand that popular demonstrations at home, whether revolutionary or reactionary, represented a double-edged sword: they were as dangerous as they were useful for the throne. Consequently, when, at Straus's urging, Roosevelt followed England's unofficial representations to Russia against the possibility of further pogroms in the pre-Easter season of 1906, the United States received a reply very different from that given after Kishinev. St. Petersburg informed the American ambassador that it held the police responsible for maintaining order; its ambassador to Washington, D.C., solemnly assured the president in similar tones.⁴⁹ The Bialystok pogrom, it turned out, would be Russia's last during Romanov rule.

IV

The Russian government's move to reestablish the *status quo ante* proved to be short-lived. Nicholas and his supporters disbanded the first two Dumas; the third, elected by a much smaller vote, was dominated by pro-czarists and antisemites. High officials also conspired to suppress evidence about the innocence of Mendel Beilis, charged in 1911 with murdering a Christian boy for Jewish ritual purposes, and kept trying to "prove" their case even after he was declared not guilty two years later. The Jews of the Pale continued to confront discriminatory legislation, Gentile animosity, and poverty so grinding that an estimated 30-35 percent at the turn of the century depended on charity provided by Jewish relief organizations. Traumatized by the murderous assaults of 1903-1906 and confronted by demographic pressures that would not down, many chose to seek liberation elsewhere.⁵⁰

The Kishinev pogrom and its successors, joined to economic crisis in the northwestern part of the Pale of Settlement, triggered a massive emigration to the United States. From 53,000 in 1903 (compared with 40,000 in 1901), the number rose to 74,000 in the next year. During 1905 and 1906, the bloodiest wave of pogroms, the figure rose to 91,000 and then 111,000. It reached a high of 115,000 the following year, and then fell but remained steady at about 60,000 until the outbreak of World War I. This great wave, perhaps reaching 1,000,000 between 1900 and 1914, changed the face of the United States and of its Jewish community.⁵¹

The American Jewish Committee oligarchy, led by Meyer Sulzberger and Louis Marshall, greatly facilitated the exodus from Russia by contributing to the defeat of a literacy test requirement for immigrants in 1907 and 1913 thanks to lobbying, propaganda, and publicity. In 1911, its members conducted a successful campaign for abrogating the Russo-American treaty of 1832, charging that Russian discrimination against the entry of American Jews violated the treaty. The committee also hoped that abrogation would inevitably compel Russia to free her own Jews. Once World War I began, the AJC drew \$100,000 from what remained of the funds of the Kishinev Committee for the Relief of Sufferers by Russian Massacres to aid Jewish victims in the war zones. It also sparked the establishment of a central relief organization for stricken European Jews victims that, together with Orthodox and labor leaders, became the highly effective American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.⁵²

The pogroms had a decisive impact on Palestine as well. Between

Kishinev and World War I, some 40,000 Russian Jews arrived, most of them young. The minority who stayed would become the leaders of the Zionist enterprise there, such as David Ben-Gurion, Yitshak Ben-Zvi, Levi Eshkol, Moshe Sharett, and Berl Katznelson. The ranks of the first arrivals swelled by co-religionists who had been disillusioned by the outcome of the 1905 Revolution, this Second Aliya brought the Jewish settlement (yishuv) to 85,000, about 12 percent of the total. Profoundly moved by “B’Ir HaHareiga,” some veterans of self-defense activity during the pogroms established Bar Giora and HaShomer, para-military units to protect settlers from marauding Bedouin and others. The latter group adopted as its slogan the aggressive lines from Ya’akov Cahan’s poem “Biryonim,” written five months after Kishinev and already cited in a Poalei Zion manifesto after the Zhitomir pogrom of 1905: “In blood and fire Judea fell, in blood and fire shall Judea rise again.”⁵³ These two groups, in turn, would inspire many to serve in Britain’s Jewish Legion during WWI and, from 1920 onwards, in the yishuv’s own Hagana (self-defense) organization.

The pogroms persuaded the world Zionist movement to adopt a new platform at the Seventh Zionist Congress in 1905. The philosophy of “synthetic” or “practical” Zionism had first been proposed by the Russian Menahem Ussishkin, vociferous opponent of the Uganda scheme, to include educational and organizational work in the Diaspora alongside diplomatic activity and agricultural settlement. Ahad Ha’am, who lambasted the Uganda plan as the logical consequence of the political Zionists’ detachment from their Hebraic past, also approved the program of *Gegenwartsarbeit* – concurrent work in Palestine and in the Diaspora communities. The Helsingfors Conference of Russian Zionists ratified this program one year later. The plan arose as a natural response to various factors: the pogroms; Herzl’s death in July 1904; the weakness of political Zionism, which also could not check Britain’s ultimate retreat from the East Africa project; the platform of the last Zionist Congress; and the growing appeal for Jewish youth of the Bund and of Marxist ideology.⁵⁴

Zangwill drew far different conclusions. He had given Herzl the first opportunity to describe his philosophy to a public audience in November 1895, before the Maccabean Club in London, and hailed his friend in *Dreamers of the Ghetto* as “a very modern Moses.” The famous British author had also opposed the Anglo-Jewish Association’s conviction, expressed after Kishinev and Gomel by President Claude Montefiore, that the time had not come for losing all hope that the Russian government would ameliorate conditions

within the Pale. After Herzl's death, and in opposition to Ussishkin and the "Zionists of Zion," Zangwill left the movement in 1905 and established the Jewish Territorialist Organization that same year. Its efforts were dedicated to the creation of a large Jewish haven in some country that need not necessarily be Palestine.⁵⁵

A few years later, Zangwill came to believe that the final goal of Jewish nationalism was the unity of all civilization and only in America might this be achieved. Owing to that country's liberal immigration policy, the peoples reunited in the New World would "ultimately harden into homogeneity of race" combining the best of Hebraism, Hellenism, and Christianity. Hence his play *The Melting Pot*, in which David Quixano escapes from the pogrom in Kishinev, which had claimed his entire family, to "shining America...where God would wipe away tears from...all faces." There the young Jewish violinist meets a beautiful Christian settlement worker, Vera Revendal, with whom he falls in love. He learns to his horror, however, that her unrepentant father had inspired the massacre as "a holy crusade." Eventually, inspired by his faith in the crucible that melts all hate and vengeance, David writes his great American Symphony in honor of his newly adopted country as the "land of tomorrow" and the "only hope of mankind." He and Vera are reunited as the curtain falls to the music of America's popular hymn "My Country 'Tis of Thee."⁵⁶

Most serious critics dismissed *The Melting Pot* as propaganda and claptrap patriotism. Adolph Klauber of the *New York Times*, for example, judged the play "insincere as a work of art and unconvincing as a human document." The shrewd Frenchman Crèvecoeur had long before been the first to observe, in *Letters from an American Farmer* (1793), that in the United States "individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men," but Zangwill's catchphrase aptly captured the current sense of Americanization triumphant. The play's obvious spread-eagleism, as a result, enjoyed great popularity. Speaking for many of his countrymen, Roosevelt rose from his theatre seat after *The Melting Pot*'s debut in Washington, D.C., on October 5, 1908, and exclaimed, "That's a great play, Mr. Zangwill!"⁵⁷

Dubnow, another champion of territorialism, hardly embraced the dissolving of Jewish separatism and the absorption of Judaism into what Zangwill would describe as "The Next Religion." His program of Yiddishist cultural autonomy in the Diaspora stood sharply at odds with his friend Ahad Ha'am's insistence that all this would be "Sisyphean labor" unless the Zionist center were established in Palestine. In Dubnow's view, Jewish history offered examples of equal and independent Jewish centers across the globe, none ever

attaining a majority of the population. Ahad Ha'am's elitist caution, advocating a gradual development of the "spiritual center," disregarded European Jewry's pressing plight. Hence Dubnow's continued call after Kishinev for an orderly mass migration, particularly to the United States.⁵⁸

On the twenty-fifth anniversary of the appearance of "El HaTsipor," Dubnow heartily thanked Bialik for the "holy tempest [*se'ara kedosha*], for the marvelous expression which you gave to our national longings from generation to generation, for the poetry of the new Jeremiah." He tried his own hand at capturing the Kishinev slaughter via a story featuring a Russian Jewish soldier who arrives in the city soon after the pogrom to find his young sister raped, her baby choked to death, and her husband beaten. Wondering why Jews did not fight back, the main protagonist approvingly cites lines from "B'Ir HaHareiga" to convey the personally bitter taste of synagogue prayers seeking Divine retribution, and he quickly leaves for Gomel and other cities to prepare Jews for self-defense. Antisemitism in the Russian army and pogroms during World War I were depicted in the soldier's recollections as well. (One year later, following the downfall of Romanov rule, Dubnow and a colleague would publish a documentary collection on the Kishinev pogrom mostly taken from the files of the imperial Ministry of Justice and the Department of Police.)⁵⁹

Dubnow's story appeared in Moscow's *HaTekufa* in 1918, along with an asterisk indicating his conviction that "the Russian Revolution had on its own solved the tragic question as the sense of world justice would have solved it in the future." It was a premature statement. The civil war (lasting until 1921) that followed the Bolshevik triumph brought havoc to Russia's Jews. Although 700 Jews were killed in pogroms mounted by Red Army detachments, the Red Army command punished these actions as running counter to Marxist ideology. Far worse, beginning in March 1919, the retreating Ukrainian national army led by Semen Petlyura and the peasant bands affiliated to it massacred the Jews in Berdichev, Zhitomir, Proskurov (about 1,700 within a few hours), and elsewhere. The counterrevolutionary White Army, identifying the Jews as pro-Bolshevik, also pogromized Jews with the support of many Russian Orthodox clergymen; the anarchists contributed their share to massive Jewish losses. It is estimated that in 1918-1921, more than 2,000 pogroms of indescribable cruelty took place, most of them in the Ukraine. Some 30,000 Jews were killed directly; together with those who succumbed to their wounds or to illnesses contracted during the pogroms, a total of about 150,000 died.⁶⁰

Jabotinsky, arguably the emerging Jewish leader most transformed by the Kishinev pogrom, entertained scant hope for life in Russia. Admittedly having

had no inner contact with Judaism during his youth, the twenty-three-year-old who brought relief to Kishinev's victims knew nothing at the time of the writings of Bialik or of Ahad Ha'am. By the end of 1903, however, readers of Jabotinsky's widely popular feuilletons, such as "Without Patriotism," in Odessa's *Novosti* recognized the seriousness of his Zionist faith. He voted against Herzl on the Uganda plan, helped draft the Helsingfors Program, and crusaded against antisemitism, Jewish assimilation, and the Bund. "B'Ir HaHareiga" he considered to have been "the foundation for all Jewish self-defense, comparable only to Deuteronomy's chapter 28 of '*tokhaha*' (reproof). In 1911, "Jabo" translated a selection of Bialik's poetry into Russian with Bialik's kind advice (a German edition appeared in 1922), presenting it as the symbol of a new Jewish generation's desire to create its own national history and thereby jettison the degradation of ghetto life. Two years later, he wrote Bialik that he would continue to try and realize the "Hebrew revolt" reflected in the poet's oeuvre.⁶¹

This individual revolt began with him joining ex-Russian Jewish officer and Galilee *halutz* (agricultural pioneer) Joseph Trumpeldor in calling for the formation of a Jewish Legion, which would join the World War I Allied powers in the effort to liberate Palestine from Ottoman rule. Jabotinsky's almost single-handed crusade finally got London to create Jewish battalions that were later consolidated into the "First Judean Regiment," of which he was decorated as a lieutenant in the first company to cross the Jordan River. In the spring of 1920, anticipating anti-Jewish violence by Arab extremists, he organized the Hagana in Jerusalem, openly leading it to confront the incited Arab masses during Passover. Briefly imprisoned, the charismatic hero joined the Jewish Agency Executive for two years until resigning because of what he considered to be Zionist acquiescence in Great Britain not living up to her responsibilities under the League of Nations' mandate, particularly London's separation in 1922 of the area east of the Jordan from Palestine. In 1925, "Jabo" and followers created the World Union of Zionist-Revisionists, which openly demanded that Palestine on both sides of the Jordan become the Jewish Commonwealth. To check adamant Arab opposition (respectfully analyzed in his 1923 essay "The Iron Wall"), he concluded that a Jewish majority with a formidable Jewish army would be essential.⁶²

Jabotinsky's militant Zionism struck no responsive chord with Bialik. Traumatized by the pogroms of 1903-1906, Jewry's now uncontested national poet fell into increasing despair. In succeeding poems, he is depicted as the unheeded prophet making for the grave ("Davar") in a world branded with

the mark of Cain (“Yadati B’Lel Arafel”). An unsatisfied creative soul (“Aharei Moti”) dies in the midst of unanswered prayer (“V’Haya Ki Timtse’u”). The Eternal Light has gone out in the empty Jewish study hall where the author was “the last of the last” (“Lifnei Aron HaSefarim”) and a broken, useless twig (“Tsanah Lo Zalzal”). Bialik’s discarded draft of a poem, retrieved by Klausner, expresses resignation that the Jewish people, creator of the great messianic ideal, will be the only nation alive not to witness eventual peace on earth. A youngster, caught between the call to preserve the last spark of redemption and the lure of *eros*, plunges into the abyss (“Megilat HaEsh”). Dubnow, having implored Bialik to write “the poem of atrocity” about the effect of World War I both on the world and on East European Jewry, was greatly distressed to receive a letter in reply about “awaiting heavenly aid” and personal doubts regarding creative ability. Instead, Bialik’s poems call for a dance of death (“LaMenatseah Al HaMeholot”), and describe the impossibility of return to the purity of childhood in a present world lacking faith and vision (“Ehad Ehad V’En Roeh”). His poetic voice, in turn, became silent.⁶³

These acutely personal reflections may well suggest, too, why Bialik chose not to release in his lifetime the four notebooks of facts and interviews about the Kishinev pogrom. Bialik complained at first that he had to take fifteen rubles from his own pocket to work on this effort, the Historical Commission not giving the funds promised. Biographer Pinhas Lahover conjectures that the poet’s decision about the notebooks lay in his feeling that “B’Ir HaHareiga” was superior to anything that might have resulted in book form. Yet publication would have added the incomparable effect of authenticity, the many eyewitness reports he transcribed far more powerful than documented volumes at the time by Davitt, Errera, Singer, Adler, Stiles, Prato, Semenov, Urussov, and Herzl associate Berthold Feiwel (writing under the pseudonym von Told). Rather, Bialik’s growing sense of failure at his own perceived national mission, perhaps most keenly expressed one year after Kishinev in “Aharei Moti,” left him harboring no illusions about the present Jewish generation. Unprepared to receive his message (highlighted in “B’Ir HaHareiga”) and learn for the future, its members should, he judged, die out in Exile. Not surprisingly, “B’Ir HaHareiga” offers no clear line of recommended action. At the poem’s conclusion, Yosef Oren has observed, the suffering prophet takes over from helpless God the mantle of silence. A later generation, Bialik thought, would hear and respond to the call of history.⁶⁴

Turning from poetry, which had ended without a ray of hope for this “so tragic a soul,” in Zangwill’s phrase, Bialik began to undertake manifold

cultural activities. Public lectures, essays, criticism, translating, and editing the best of classic Jewish literature followed for the rest of his life. Thanks to the pro-Zionist Gorki's intercession with Lenin's totalitarian Soviet government, Bialik and a group of other Hebrew writers received permission in 1921 to leave the country. He went to Berlin, a center of Jewish émigré authors, and worked there until 1924, when he moved permanently to Tel Aviv. Bialik never wrote "the poetry of rebirth" which a member of the Kishinev relief society hoped that he would write after settling in Eretz Israel, having long ago sensed a basic truth: "Know that the root of my soul is the Exile, and who knows? Perhaps the Divine presence does not rest on me except from sadness and specifically in an unholy land." Yet he hailed the new Hebrew University (1925) as a people's welcome realization that "without a tangible homeland, without private national premises that are entirely ours, we can have no sort of a life, either material or spiritual." Bialik traveled to the United States and Great Britain on cultural missions; served as president of the Hebrew Writers' Union and of the Hebrew Language Council; and initiated the popular *Oneg Shabbat*, a Sabbath cultural-spiritual forum for his secularized contemporaries.⁶⁵

On June 2, 1934, Bialik addressed a large Tel Aviv audience for, it soon transpired, the last time. Noting that he was about to depart for medical treatment in Vienna, he warned listeners about the yishuv's own serious illnesses: foreign labor, political rivalry, and civic hatred. Bialik ended with a prayer that all would see, upon his return, signs of healing and recovery. The blessing was denied him; he died abroad on July 4. An almost "dense silence" engulfed the stricken Jewish metropolis for Bialik's funeral, Hadassah founder Henrietta Szold finding it hard to believe that Tel Aviv, "a city in undress, could assume such an aspect of dignity and spiritual elevation." In keeping with an earlier request, the national poet was laid to final rest next to the grave of the man he always called "my teacher and mentor," Ahad Ha'am.⁶⁶

V

No doubts arose as to Bialik's legacy at the time of his death. Jabotinsky on the political Right, remembering how he was so impressed when first hearing the "prophetic thunder" of "B'Ir HaHareiga," characterized the deceased as "the one poet in all of modern literature whose poetry directly molded the soul of a generation." On the Left, Ben-Gurion replied, in part, to British

High Commissioner Arthur Wauchope's condolence message thus: "He was the spiritual leader of his people, the master craftsman of our language. No Jew of our time has had such a powerful impact on the life of his people.... In our eyes he was the bearer of the nation's legacy, of its ideals and aspirations."⁶⁷

Most agreed with the poet-critic Ya'akov Fikhtmann's assessment that "B'Ir HaHareiga" signaled perhaps the most important date in the history of modern Hebrew poetry." For many readers, this most enduring literary response to the massacre of April 1903 carried the power of such classic indictments as Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Zola's *J'accuse!* Accepting (despite evidence to the contrary) Ahad Ha'am's earlier gloss about Jewish quietism during the Kishinev pogrom, "B'Ir HaHareiga" created a new national text. In evoking the hopelessness, the stagnation, and the shame of Exile, Bialik's arresting *cri de coeur* in Hebrew implied the necessity of a new path: human defiance – as much for the sake of reasserting Jewish self-respect as to save life and property. His cruel, uncompromising message, observed Israeli President Zalman Shazar, forbade tears, destroyed consolation, and uprooted any remaining illusions thereafter. Especially once published with its original title and several censored lines restored in 1905, along with two preceding poems as *Songs of Wrath*, Bialik's masterpiece contributed greatly to the change of mood among the radical, modernist youth in Russian Jewry. Zionists adopted the elegy into their historical canon, with sovereignty in the Promised Land viewed as the only answer to a bi-millennial history of persecution and degradation.⁶⁸

Jewish art, too, began to reflect the sea change wrought by Kishinev and the succeeding pogroms of 1903-1906. For the cover of Gorki's miscellany, E. M. Lilien offered the traditional response of martyrdom: an aged Jew, depicted as a Christlike figure on a stake, burned in his prayer shawl and kissed by an angel holding a Torah scroll. In related spirit, Samuel Hirszenberg's "Golus" (1904) shows an endless line of suffering Jews moving westward in stoic resignation, and his "The Black Banner" (also called "Funeral of the Zaddik," 1905) portrays the tragedy of a sea of hassidim mourning not only their leader, but an entire way of communal life. Bialik, by contrast, instructed Joseph Bodko to prepare wood-cut illustrations for "B'Ir HaHareiga" that had the Almighty both raising His fist against the pogrom's victims and taking the image of a prostrate old Jew whose strength is gone. More pointedly, bearded shtetl Jews occupy the background of Lazar Krestin's "Birth of Resistance" (1905), while young men and one woman step forward to defend themselves with staves and guns. The standard depictions by Abel Pann (Abba Pfefferman) of "The Day after the Pogrom" (1903) and "Refugees" (1906)

would be succeeded by his graphic series of fifty sketches about pogroms in Russia during World War I (“Jug of Tears,” 1916), including that of an armed mother in “Defending Hearth and Home.”⁶⁹

The Kishinev pogrom and Bialik’s presence continued to seize the Jewish imagination. “In the last resort,” observed the English essayist Philip Guedella in 1920, “if the highest argument for Zionism is to be found in the prophet Isaiah, the case for it on the narrowest grounds is – Kishineff.” Arab attacks against Jews in Eretz Israel that same year, Trumpeldor falling in the defense of Tel-Hai, led some to draw analogies to the slaughter of 1903; Brenner quoted from *Al HaShehita*’s “All the world is my gallows.” The yishuv’s press cited “B’Ir HaHareiga” after the Arab riots of 1921, in which Brenner and forty-six other Jews were murdered. In 1929, the butchery by Arabs of the “old yishuv” (deeply religious Jews, many non-Zionist), who displayed helplessness in Safed and Hebron, led the “new yishuv” to embrace “*B’Ir HaHareiga*”’s censures against exilic life once again.⁷⁰

This trend continued in the 1930’s. Viewing the first official steps taken against Germany’s Jews in March 1933 as “but another form of what took place in Kishinev in 1903, and what happened in Kishinev served to vitalize Jewry throughout the world as nothing else,” Herzl’s former secretary, Jacob de Haas, pressed the Zionist Organization of America to champion a program of mass immigration to Eretz Israel. One week later, the Jewish Agency Executive in Jerusalem considered that a public manifesto should be authored by Bialik to arouse the yishuv and world Jewry. Quoting Bialik’s “each people has as much heaven over its head as it has land under its feet,” Hayim Greenberg unsuccessfully tried to persuade Mohandas Gandhi in 1937 to speak out against the venomous anti-Jewish propaganda amid the millions of Muslims in India as Jews attempted to emerge in Palestine from the “anomalous state of homelessness and landlessness” to which history had doomed them.⁷¹

Once World War II began, Jewish youth under the Nazi jackboot rallied to Bialik’s message. Not prepared to accept Gandhi’s advice, given three weeks after *Kristallnacht*, that Jews remain in Germany and pursue his doctrine of *satyagraha* (passive non-resistance even unto death), their organizations regularly commemorated the anniversary of Bialik’s death and reprinted “Al-HaShehita” and “B’Ir HaHareiga.” The poet Yitshak Katzenelson, who translated the latter elegy into Yiddish while crammed into the Warsaw Ghetto along with over 400,000 Jews, wrote that “Bialik saw our anguish, expressed it, and captured it for all time to come.” And on January 1, 1942, in the first call for armed resistance to the Holocaust, Abba Kovner in the

Vilna Ghetto echoed Bialik's critique of exilic submissiveness in exhorting fellow Jews: "Let us not go as sheep to slaughter!"⁷² Subsequent revolts in the Warsaw Ghetto and elsewhere, followed by uprisings in Auschwitz-Birkenau and other death centers, transformed the poet's words of 1903 into deeds forty years later.

Yet Germany's "Final Solution to the Jewish Question" made any analogy with a past pogrom, however savage, impossible to sustain. That nation's policy of total, systematic annihilation, begun with the Third Reich's invasion of the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, had no precedent in either Jewish or world history. Even regarding "B'Ir HaHareiga," later recalled one of the primary organizers of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, "you couldn't say that pogroms took place on the same day wherever there were Jews. So, there wasn't anything or anyone to learn from; and if I had considered, even for a moment, what we hadn't seen in our worst nightmares, I would have thought: 'Yitshak Zuckerman, go to the madhouse!' Because you had to have a sick imagination to come to such conclusions."⁷³

Everywhere under Berlin's control in World War II, all Jews were marked for murder. Dubnow, whose last volume (1940) in his monumental *History of the Jewish People* concluded by heralding the emerging autonomous Jewish communities in the United States and Eretz Israel ("the state-in-the-making"), was shot on December 8, 1941, at the age of 81 along with thousands of the Riga Jewish community in Rumbula, five miles away from the Latvian capital. Of Kishinev's 65,000 Jews in 1941, an estimated 53,000 had perished by V-E Day under the rule of Rumanian gendarmes and German SS units. In the entire Polish-Soviet area, which had a Jewish population of 7,005,000 in mid-1941, Jewish losses (excluding military casualties) at the hands of Germans, Ukrainians, and Baltic-area nationals amounted to 4,565,000.⁷⁴ Given the unique fusion of murderous Nazi zeal and methodic precision, the instances of Jewish armed resistance did not present a significant factor in response. The State of Israel, because of the sharp negation of the Exile by Bialik, Brenner, and some of their intellectual contemporaries, only began to comprehend this reality decades later.⁷⁵

Remarkably, "Kishinev" still reverberates in Jewish memory. Thus, for example, Henry Roth's *Mercy of a Rude Stream: A Star Shines Over Mt. Morris Park* (1994), the long-awaited sequel to the author's widely acclaimed *Call it Sleep* (1934), recalls that slaughter powerfully, if briefly. In Roth's autobiographical novel, immigrant Ira Stigman, coming of age in New York City's Lower East Side before America entered into World War I, relates his

mother's still-haunted experience of the antisemitic savageries in Russia:

The Great War came closer. The Huns impaled babies on their bayonets – though Mom ridiculed stories of German atrocities. “What, the Russ is better? Czar *Kolki* (*kolki* means bullet) *iz a feiner mensh*? Who in all the world is more benighted than the Russian *mujik*? Who doesn't remember their *pogroms*, the Kishinev *pogroms*, in 1903? *Pogroms* led by seminar students, especially on Easter – Kishinev when I was still a maid. And after they lost to the *Yaponchikis* when I met your father, immediately they take it out on the Jews. Go! More likely the Russ impaled the infant on his bayonet.”⁷⁶

An antisemitic orgy of outright murder, rape, and pillage in Bessarabia's capital more than 100 years ago should have receded into the forgotten annals of recorded time. The number of victims and the destruction in Kishinev 1903 pale by comparison with the Holocaust and even by the standards set during World War I and the pogroms of 1918-1921. As for the author of “B'Ir HaHareiga,” in early 2003 some Israeli commentators wondered at the choice of the first four lines from Bialik's “Aharei Moti” by Navy chaplain Harold Robinson to eulogize Ilan Ramon at the official U.S. memorial service for the *Columbia* astronauts, pointing out that many in the reborn Jewish state are no longer familiar with the Hebrew author's work and his many references to the rich Jewish tradition.⁷⁷

Yet it is the very passage of a century that offers the perspective required to appreciate one pogrom's historical significance. Coming, as the Bund proclamation put it, at the start of “a century in which humanity boasts of its civilization, its progress, its education and culture,” what took place in Kishinev shook much of the Western world into protest against the Romanov regime for the first time.⁷⁸ The brutal assault also strengthened a greater sense of Jewish solidarity across the United States, where a community of opposing camps took its first major steps toward defending Jewish rights in America and elsewhere. Russian critics of the czarist dictatorship, which was commonly viewed as responsible, seized on the pogrom as another justification for revolt. Free from pogroms for the past twenty years, the Jews of Russia realized now how easily a few militant instigators could take advantage of religious antagonism and economic rivalry to unleash an organized attack. This antisemitic assault quickly turned deadly in Kishinev, because police and soldiers were ineffective

and hostile, religious leaders remained silent, respectable middle-class Christians passed by, and the central government wavered before blaming the victims. As pogroms mounted in the next three years, St. Petersburg's true intentions became clear. The waves of Jewish emigration to the United States and, in far smaller measure, to Palestine followed suit. As a consequence of these different responses, the impact reached global proportions.

"B'Ir HaHareiga," more than any other artistic creation in the floodgate of response worldwide, gave voice to the seismic change that had begun to affect the Jewish people. Judah Leib Gordon, Bialik's predecessor as the "poet laureate" of Hebrew literature, had reacted to the pogroms of 1881 by calling for emigration away from the "murderous villains" in "Ahoti Ruhama" (1882), with God seen even earlier as indifferent to historic Jewish suffering ("Bein Shinei Arayot," "B'Metsulot Yam"). Bialik's seminal work, going much further, assumed God's impotence and, therefore, implicitly called for self-defense. That cause became a given among Russian Jewish youth and their counterparts in Palestine's Second Aliya, whose first members were veterans of the Gomel pogrom resistance. And unlike Gordon's emphasis on the United States as a large refuge, Bialik only advocated Eretz Israel. As for Jewry at-large, the poet's dramatic monologue, suffused with raw anger, helped mightily in turning Kishinev into a metaphor for pogrom and vulnerability, much as Mainz and Nemirov had centuries earlier. The complete publication of Bialik's collected testimonies, to mark the eightieth anniversary of the barbarous rampage in Kishinev, further captures that metaphor's potency to illustrate Jewry's tragic past.⁷⁹

In 1903, former U.S. President Grover Cleveland warned the Carnegie Hall protest meeting that such things as occurred in Kishinev "give rise to a distressing fear that even the enlightenment of the twentieth century has neither destroyed nor subdued the barbarity of human nature, nor wholly redeemed the civilized world from 'man's inhumanity to man.'" Later, Chaim Weizmann, who assumed Herzl's role, fabricated a memory that he had joined a group of 100 youngsters in defending the Jews of Kishinev during the assault, writing this to Dorothy de Rothschild in September 1914 and repeating it as fact in his autobiography. Yet, reminiscing in the same volume, the first president of the State of Israel caught the essence of the vast divide that existed between the moment of Cleveland's expressed anxiety and the years of the Holocaust, noting of Kishinev: "Certainly it cannot compete with what we have become accustomed to in the fourth and fifth decades of this century. Perhaps the key lies there: 'What we have become accustomed to.'"

At the same time, Weizmann concluded that “in our memories Kishinev has remained the classic prototype of the pogrom.”⁸⁰ What erupted in that city during three days in April 1903, a turning point in Jewish history, remains so. Its varied legacy is with us still.

Notes

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- 1 For some contemporary accounts, see Michael Davitt, *Within the Pale: The True Story of Anti-Semitic Persecution in Russia* (New York, 1903); Yaakov Goren, ed. *Eduyot Nifgaei Kishinev KeFi ShehNikhtevu Al Yedei H.N. Bialik v'Haverav* (Tel Aviv, 1991); Leo Errera, *Les Massacres de Kishinev* (Brussels, 1903); B.A. Henry, *Les Massacres de Kichinev* (Paris, 1903); Berthold Feiwel (von Told), *Die Judenmassacres in Kischinev* (Berlin, 1903); Raffaello Prato, *I massacri di Kischineff* (Rome, 1903); Isidore Singer, *Russia at the Bar of the American People: A Memorial of Kishinev* (New York, 1904); Cyrus Adler, *The Voice of America on Kishineff* (Philadelphia, 1904); W. C. Stiles, *Out of Kishineff: The Duty of the American People to the Russian Jew* (New York, 1903); and E. Semenov, *The Russian Government and the Massacres* (London, 1906). The most recent description, based on Russian archives, is Edward H. Judge, *Easter in Kishinev, Anatomy of a Pogrom* (New York, 1992), pp. 49–75. The semi-official St. Petersburg newspaper, quoted in the London *Jewish Chronicle* on May 8, 1903, is cited in David Vital, *Zionism: The Formative Years* (Oxford, 1982), p. 240.
- 2 *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 10 (Jerusalem, 1973), pp. 1065–1066; Davitt, *Within the Pale*, pp. 172, 174. In memoirs published years later, the senior surgeon at the Jewish Hospital in Kishinev declared that he had treated at least 500 patients after the pogrom, many with serious injuries. M. B. Slutskii, *V skornbye dni: Kishinevskii pogrom 1903 goda* (Kishinev, 1930).
- 3 Herman Rosenthal, “Kishinef (Kishinev),” *Jewish Encyclopedia*, 7 (New York, 1906), p. 512; London *Times* quoted in Robert G. Weisbord, *African Zion* (Philadelphia, 1968), p. 38; Davitt, *Within the Pale*, p. 95. According to the May Laws, no new Jewish settlers were allowed in the Pale; Jews could not own or manage real estate or

farms outside the cities of the Pale; Jews were not allowed to do business on Sunday or other Christian holidays. These "Temporary Rules" remained in effect until the fall of the czardom in 1917. A *numerus clausus* (quota system) was also introduced in Russian schools, with an upper limit of 10 percent established for the proportion of Jewish students in the Pale, 5 percent outside it, and 3 percent in Moscow and St. Petersburg.

- 4 Davitt, *Within the Pale*, pp. 97-98.
- 5 Davitt, *Within the Pale*, pp. 99, 189; Singer, *Russia at the Bar of the American People*, p. 8; Norman Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide: The Myth of the Jewish World-Conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (New York, 1967), p. 109.
- 6 Davitt, *Within the Pale*, pp. 123-124.
- 7 *Sefer Bernstein-Kohan*, M. Bernstein-Kohan and Y. Koren, eds. (Tel Aviv, 1946), pp. 127-137; Simon Wolf, *The Presidents I Have Known from 1860 to 1918* (Washington, D.C., 1918), pp. 187-188; Cyrus Adler and Aaron M. Margalith, *With Firmness in the Right: American Diplomatic Action Affecting Jews, 1840-1945* (New York, 1946), pp. 261-263; *New York Times*, May 19, 1903.
- 8 Eliyahu Feldman, "Plehve V'HaPogrom B'Kishinev b'1903," *HebAvar*, 17 (1970), 137-150; Davitt, *Within the Pale*, pp. 181, 187-188; Edward H. Judge, *Plehve, Repression and Reform in Imperial Russia, 1902-1904* (Syracuse, 1983), p. 55.
- 9 Hayim Shurer, Y. Koren, and D. Vinitzki, eds., *HaPogrom B'Kishinev* (Tel Aviv, 1963), pp. 176-181; Noah Grois, "HaYehudim B'Hayav U'V'Yetsirato Shel Korolenko," *HebAvar*, 19 (1972), 83-98. Korolenko's *Dom No. 13 (Epizod iz Kishineuskago Pogroma)* was first printed illegally in Russia by the Bund in 1903, with a second edition in London. It was published in *Contemporary Review* in February 1904 (Vol. 85, pp. 266-280). The essay first appeared openly in Russia during the 1905 revolution.
- 10 Davitt, *Within the Pale* (his first dispatch published on May 21, 1903), pp. 107ff; Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism, and the Russian Jews, 1862-1917* (Cambridge, 1984), p. 474; Adler and Margalith, *With Firmness in the Right*, pp. 263-264; Philip Ernest Schoenberg, "The American Reaction to the Kishinev Pogrom of 1903," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly*, 63 (March 1974), 262-263. Adding a distinctive voice to this chorus, black journals and organizations also sought thereby to call attention to the lynching of southern African-Americans. See Arnold Shankman, "Brothers across the Sea: Afro-Americans on the Persecution of Russian Jews, 1881-1917," *Jewish Social Studies*, 37 (1975), 114-121.
- 11 David Vital, *A People Apart: A Political History of the Jews in Europe, 1789-1939* (Oxford, 2001), p. 516; Prince S. D. Urussov, *Memoirs of a Russian Governor, The Kishinev Pogrom*, trans. Herman Rosenthal (New York, 1970); *Sefer Bernstein-Kohan*, p. 135; Rosenthal, "Kishinef (Kishinev)," p. 513. Also see F. S. Zuckerman, "Self-Imagery and the Art of Propaganda: V. K. von Plehve as Propagandist," *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 28 (1982), 68-81.
- 12 Wolf, *The Presidents I Have Known from 1860 to 1918*, pp. 191-215; Tyler Dennett, *John Hay* (New York, 1934), pp. 394-400; Howard K. Beale, *Theodore Roosevelt and*

- the Rise of America to World Power* (Baltimore, 1956), pp. 196-197.
- 13 Shurer *et al.*, *HaPogrom B'Kishinev*, p. 21; Vital, *Zionism*, pp. 243-248; Shimon Dubnov, *Divrei Yemei Am Olam*, 10 (Tel Aviv, 1968), pp. 192-193. Plehve to Herzl, July 20, 1903, C/15, Natan Gelber MSS. (P83), Central Archives of the History of the Jewish People (CAHJP), Jerusalem. When an associate wrote to Herzl while visiting Kishinev soon after the pogrom, he received the leader's reply that the only appropriate response would be to have a Zionist organization established there. See Nahum Sokolow, *Ketavim Nirvharim*, 3 (Jerusalem, 1961), pp. 175-176. Chamberlain had earlier expressed his sympathy with persecuted Jews in Russia and in Rumania. See Weisbord, *African Zion*, pp. 129-130.
 - 14 Alex Bein, *Theodore Herzl, A Biography* (New York, 1962), p. 438.
 - 15 Hayim Shurer, ed., *Bessarabia, Kovetz* (Tel Aviv, 1941), p. 21; Singer, *Russia at the Bar of the American People*, pp. 285-289; A. R. Malakhi, "P'raot Kishinev B'Aspaklarit HaShira B'Ivrit U'V'Yiddish," in G. Kressel, ed. *Al Admat Bessarabia* 3, (Jerusalem, 1963), 1-98; David G. Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse: Responses to Catastrophe in Modern Jewish Culture* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 77-78, 165.
 - 16 Yisrael Halprin, *Sefer HaG'vura*, 3 (Tel Aviv, 1950), pp. 20-21.
 - 17 Halprin, *Sefer HaG'vura*, pp. 21-35; Yirmiyahu Helpert, *Avi, Michael Helpert* (Tel Aviv, 1964), pp. 256-257; *Mivhar Igrot Weizmann*, ed. B. Litvinoff (Tel Aviv, 1986), p. 74; *Kitvei Berl Katznelson*, 11 (Tel Aviv, 1949), p. 38; Yitshak Maor, *HaTenua HaTsiyonit B'Rusya* (Jerusalem, 1986), pp. 216-219; Ze'ev Ivinski, *Mahapeikha V'Terror* (Tel Aviv, 1989), pp. 176-181. Dashevsky died in a Soviet prison in June 1934. See *Davar*, July 29, 1934.
 - 18 Steven J. Zipperstein, *Evasive Prophet: Ahad Ha'am and the Origins of Zionism* (Berkeley, 1993), pp. 202-203; Ze'ev Jabotinsky, *Autobiografia* (Jerusalem, 1947), pp. 44-47. For Pinsker, see Monty Noam Penkower, *The Emergence of Zionist Thought* (Millwood, 1986), pp. 31-40.
 - 19 *Igrot Ahad Ha'am*, 3 (Tel Aviv, 1924), pp. 115, 120-121, 124-125.
 - 20 *Kol Kitvei Ahad Ha'am* (Jerusalem, 1956), pp. 501-502.
 - 21 *Igrot Ahad Ha'am*, p. 127; Simon Dubnow, "Megillat Setarim Shel Ahad Ha'am," in Shurer, *HaPogrom B'Kishinev*, Hayim Shurer *et al.*, eds. (Tel Aviv, 1963), pp. 111-112.
 - 22 Simon Dubnow, "Ninth Letter: A Historic Moment (The Question of Emigration)," in *Nationalism and History*, Koppel S. Pinson, ed. (Cleveland, 1961), pp. 192-199.
 - 23 *Sefer Simon Dubnow*, Shimon Rawidowicz, ed. (Jerusalem, 1954), pp. 332-333. For Spektor's earlier activity, see Israel Oppenheim, "The Kovno Circle of Rabbi Yitshak Elhanan Spektor: Organizing Western Public Opinion over Pogroms in the 1880s," in *Organizing Rescue: National Jewish Solidarity in the Modern Period*, S. I. Troen and B. Pinkus, eds. (London, 1992), pp. 91-126.
 - 24 Joseph Klausner, "Sifrutenu," *HaShiloah*, 10 (1902-1903), pp. 434-452; H. N. Bialik, *Shirim* (1970), pp. 9-11, 32-35, 313-333, 29-30, 67-68, 69, 313-333, 340-349. Ahad Ha'am did not publish Bialik's "Bikhrakai Yam" in *HaShiloah* because he considered it dismissive of Herzl. See *Ketavim Genuzim Shel H.N. Bialik* (Tel Aviv, 1971), pp. 131, 355n131.

- 25 Bialik, *Shirim*, 152-153; Pinhas Lahover, *Bialik, Hayav V'Yetsirotav*, 2 (Tel Aviv, 1955), p. 426n.
- 26 *Sefer Bernstein-Kohan*, p. 138; Pesah Auerbakh, "H.N. Bialik B'Ir HaHareiga," in *HaPogrom B'Kishinev*, Hayim Shurer *et al.*, eds., p. 28; *Igrot H.N. Bialik*, 1, P. Lahover ed. (Tel Aviv, 1938), pp. 180-181; Lahover, *Bialik*, pp. 424-425.
- 27 Bialik, *Shirim*, pp. 350-60; Y.H., Ravnitski, "H.N. Bialik," in *Sefer Bialik*, Ya'akov Fichman, ed. (Tel Aviv, 1934), p. 130. I have used the English translation by A.M. Klein, reprinted in David Roskies, ed., *The Literature of Destruction, Jewish Responses to Catastrophe* (Philadelphia, 1988), pp. 160-168.
- 28 Roskies, *The Literature of Destruction*, p. 146. Incisive analyses of "B'Ir HaHareiga" can be found in Hillel Barzel, *Shirat HaTehiya: Hayim Nahman Bialik* (Tel Aviv, 1990), pp. 257-282; Alan Mintz, *Hurban* (New York, 1984), pp. 129-154; Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse*, pp. 86-91; Shmuel Verses, "Ben Tokhaha L'Apologetika – B'Ir HaHareiga Shel Bialik U'MiSaviv La," in *Mehkarei Yerushalayim B'Sifrut Ivrit*, 9 (1986), pp. 23-54; U. Shavit and Z. Shamir, eds. *B'Mevo'ei Ir HaHareiga, Mi'ohar Ma'amarim Al Shiro Shel Bialik* (Tel Aviv, n.d.). For examples of self-defense that Bialik had collected in Kishinev, see Goren, *Eduyot Nifga'ei Kishinev*, pp. 94, 96, 106-107, 111, 114, 123, 141, 211-212, 217-218, 229. For the censorship, see *Igrot H. N. Bialik*, pp. 189, 192-193.
- 29 Lahover, *Bialik*, pp. 433-438; Michael Stanislawski, *Zionism and the Fin de Siècle* (Berkeley, 2001), pp. 187-196; Malachi, "P'ra'ot Kishinev," p. 86. For Brenner's earlier praise of Bialik's poetry, see *Igrot Y.H. Brenner*, 1 (Tel Aviv, 1941), p. 127. Curiously, the pre-eminent Jewish historian to succeed Dubnow refers to Frug as "the leading Jewish poet of the age" when quoting from "Hut Rahmones", and says nary a word about Bialik or his decisive influence on Jewish self-defense after the Kishinev pogrom. Salo W. Baron, *The Russian Jew Under Tsars and Soviets* (N.Y., 1978), pp. 57-59. Is this because Bialik sharply negated the exile in "B'Ir HaHareiga" and other poems, whereas Baron's monumental volumes on Jewish history throughout millennia champion Jewry's myriad achievements outside of Eretz Israel?
- 30 Lahover, *Bialik*, p. 439; Yisrael Berman, "Im H.N. Bialik B'Kishinev," in *Bessarabia*, Hayim Shurer, ed. (Tel Aviv, 1941), pp. 160-164; Zalman Shazar, *Or Ishim*, 1 (Jerusalem, 1964), p. 88; Y. H. Biltski, *H.N. Bialik V'Yiddish* (Tel Aviv, 1970), pp. 126-131; *Shirat H.N. Bialik, Antologia*, Haim Orlan, ed. (Tel Aviv, 1971), pp. 216-217, 220-221. Klausner informed the poet that he was very disappointed with the Yiddish version (also undertaken because Bialik did not approve of I.L. Peretz's translation), since Bialik had not restricted himself to the use of "our national speech." Moshe Ungerfeld, "Keitsad Hiber Bialik Et 'Al HaShehita' V'Et 'B'Ir HaHareiga," in *Measef, Mukdash L'Yetsirat H.N. Bialik*, H. Barzel, ed., 10 (Tel Aviv, 1975), pp. 337-341.
- 31 *Complete Diaries of Herzl*, R. Patai, ed., H. Zohn, trans. (New York, 1960), pp. 1522-1524, 1534-1540.
- 32 Bein, *Theodor Herzl*, p. 444; Vital, *Zionism*, p. 282; *The Diaries of Theodor Herzl*, M. Lowenthal, ed. and trans. (New York, 1962), pp. 404, 407.
- 33 Vital, *Zionism*, pp. 285-308; Helpern, *Avi, Michael Helpern*, pp. 258-259; Bein,

- Theodor Herzl*, p. 456; *The Diaries of Theodor Herzl*, pp. 408-409. Tisha B'Av in the Jewish calendar marks the destructions of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem by the Babylonians (586 B.C.E.) and the Romans (70 C.E.).
- 34 Dubnow, *Divrei Yemei Am Olam*, p. 193; Halprin, *Sefer HaGvura*, pp. 46-62; Vital, *A People Apart*, pp. 528-532. Plehve, aware of this new manifestation, sent a circular to local government officials outlawing any Jewish self-defense. See Maor, *HaTenua HaTsiyonit*, pp. 204-215.
 - 35 Vital, *A People Apart*, pp. 532-535, 582; Louis Greenberg, *The Jews in Russia: The Struggle for Emancipation*, 2, M. Wischnitzer, ed. (New York, 1976), pp. 48, 82, 103, 108; Urussov, *Memoirs of a Russian Governor*, pp. 42-43.
 - 36 Russia's ambassador to Constantinople, requested by Plehve via the foreign ministry to ascertain Turkey's position on Zionism, reported back in December that Turkey was treating Herzl's projects with a great deal of suspicion, and that any Russian intervention in favor of Herzl would fortify Turkey's distrust towards Russia and other powers. Having personally read this dispatch, Nicholas II deemed it well grounded. Alexander Lokshin, "Shaping of the Policy, Tsarist Administration and Zionism in Russia in the End of 19th – Beginning of 20th Century)," *Vestnik Yevreiskogo Universiteta v Moskve* 1 (1992), 52-53. My thanks to Professor Aivars Stranga for providing this source.
 - 37 Plehve interview with Wolf, October 26, 1903, file 68, Wolf-Mowshowitch MSS., YIVO, Center for Jewish History, New York City. That December, Plehve gave permission to Jews to settle in 158 locations hitherto closed to them, ordered in March 1904 that the expulsion of Jews from the locations where they lived illegally be stopped, and lifted the ban of their residing within the 50 kilometer frontier zone. Valery Engel, "Liberal Tendencies in "the Jewish Policy" of the Tsarist Autocracy at the End of the XIX and the Beginning of the XX Centuries," *Vestnik Yevreiskogo Universiteta v Moskve* 3 (7) (1994), 49-53. My thanks to Professor Aivars Stranga for providing this source.
 - 38 Rosenthal, "Kishinef (Kishinev)," pp. 513-514; Singer, *Russia at the Bar of the American People*, pp. 248-283; Judge, *Easter in Kishinev*, chap. 6. A secret government report admitted that Kishinev's Jews gathered for self-defense, not to attack the Christian population. See Maor, *HaTenua HaTsiyonit B'Rusya*, p. 211.
 - 39 Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide*, pp. 65-67. The czar initially embraced the *Protocols* as authentic but rejected their use by the Black Hundreds for propaganda once a secret official inquiry proved the document's spuriousness. See Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide*, p. 115.
 - 40 Shlomo Lambroza, "Jewish Responses to Pogroms in Late Imperial Russia," in *Living With Antisemitism: Modern Jewish Responses*, J. Reinharz, ed. (Hanover, N.H., 1987), p. 267; Abraham Rabinovich, "Jubilant over Japan," *Jerusalem Post Magazine*, April 9, 2004, pp. 32-33; Maor, *HaTenua HaTsiyonit B'Rusya*, pp. 276-277, 279-280; Arthur Ruppin, *Die Juden der Genenwart* (1904), reprinted in English as *The Jews of Today*, M. Bentwich, trans. (London, 1913), p. 300.
 - 41 Lambroza, "Jewish Responses to Pogroms in Late Imperial Russia," p. 268. The czar's security chief, General Spiridovich, remarked that Nicholas's antisemitism had

- two main causes: the considerable number of Jews among Russian revolutionaries (terrorists included) and the support of German, English, and American Jewish bankers for Japan in its war with Russia in 1904-1905. Alexander I. Spiridovic, "Okhrana and anti-Semitism in Pre-Revolutionary Russia," *Voprosy Istorii*, 8 (2003), 3-36. My thanks to Professor Aivars Stranga for providing this source.
- 42 Simon Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland* (Philadelphia, 1920), pp. 128-129; Maor, *HaTenua HaTsiyonit B'Rusya*, pp. 313-314; Lambroza, "Jewish Responses to Pogroms in Late Imperial Russia," pp. 268-269; Semenov, *The Russian Government and the Massacres*, pp. 149-160, 195-224. At the request of the World Zionist Organization, Leo Motzkin published a book, mostly written by him under the name A. Linden, about Russian anti-Jewish violence from the early nineteenth century through the pogroms of 1905-1906: *Die Judenpogrome in Russland*, Vols. 1-2 (Cologne, 1910). Also see files 1-28, Leo Motzkin MSS. (P10), CAHJP, Jerusalem.
 - 43 Lambroza, "Jewish Responses to Pogroms in Late Imperial Russia," pp. 269-271; Vital, *Zionism*, p. 387; *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 14 (Jerusalem, 1973), pp. 1125-1127; Lucy S. Dawidowicz, ed., *The Golden Tradition* (New York, 1967), pp. 383-388; *Kol Kitvei Y. H. Brenner*, 6 (Tel Aviv, 1927), pp. 29-33. Proceeds from the sale of the latter story, as the author's dedication notes, went to "Jewish self-defense in Russia."
 - 44 Richard Charques, *The Twilight of Imperial Russia* (London, 1958), pp. 83-84; Judge, *Easter in Kishinev*, p. 144; Yaakov Mazeh, *Zikbronot*, 4 (Tel Aviv, 1936), pp. 96-108.
 - 45 Lambroza, "Jewish Responses to Pogroms in Late Imperial Russia," pp. 272-273; Vital, *A People Apart*, pp. 518-520; Maor, *HaTenua HaTsiyonit B'Rusya*, pp. 306-309. For a detailed analysis of Russian leftist opposition to the Bund, see Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics*, chap. 4.
 - 46 Naomi W. Cohen, *A Dual Heritage: The Public Career of Oscar S. Straus* (Philadelphia, 1969), pp. 132-133. For the economic and political considerations that dovetailed with Schiff's hostility to the antisemitic regime, see Daniel Gutwein, "Yaakov Schiff U'Mimun Milhemet Rusya-Yapan: Perek B'Toldot HaDiplomatia HaYehudit," *Zion*, 54 (1989), pp. 321-350.
 - 47 Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics*, pp. 487-492; Waldman to Adler, May 28, 1933, German Policy Committee files, American Jewish Committee Archives, New York City.
 - 48 Aryeh Yodfat, "Memshelet Artsot HaBrit U'Praot 1903-1906 B'Rusya," *HebAvar*, 22 (1977), pp. 51-52; Cohen, *A Dual Heritage*, pp. 146-148.
 - 49 Cohen, *A Dual Heritage*, p. 135. For the poet Naftali Herz Imber, whose "Tikvatenu" (1884) would later become Israel's national anthem, "*HaTikva*," Japan's historic victory inspired an ode that included this stanza: "Tell ye the tidings, to nations proclaim / How Ivan the Terrible fell, / Revenge for Kishinev's crime / To all tongues the tidings tell." See Rabinovich, "Jubilant over Japan," p. 33.
 - 50 Maurice Samuel, *Blood Accusation: The Strange History of the Beilis Case* (Philadelphia, 1966); files 29-36, Motzkin MSS., CAHJP; Zvi Gitelman, *A Century of Ambivalence: The Jews of Russia and the Soviet Union, 1881 to the Present* (New York, 1988), p. 78.
 - 51 Vital, *A People Apart*, p. 584. Shaul Stampfer has shown that the bulk of the Russian Jewish immigrants came from the northwestern part of the Pale, where

- economic and demographic pressures (rather than antisemitism, which centered in the south) were decisive. At the same time, the phenomenon of significant Jewish female and child migration, not common for other groups and reflecting a desire to make a permanent home in the United States, was the product of antisemitic pressure. Shaul Stampfer, "The Geographic Background of East European Jewish Migration to the United States before World War I," in I. A. Glazier and L. De Rosa, *Migrations Across Time and Nations: Population Mobility in Historical Contexts* (New York, 1986), pp. 220-230.
- 52 Naomi W. Cohen, *Not Free to Desist: The American Jewish Committee, 1906-1966* (Philadelphia, 1972), chaps. 3-5; Waldman to Ratshesky, June 27, 1933, Max Kohler MSS., Box 11, American Jewish Historical Society (AJHS), Center for Jewish History, New York City.
 - 53 *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 9 (Jerusalem, 1973), pp. 328-330; *Kitvei Yaakov Caban*, 1, *Shirim* (Tel Aviv, 1938), pp. 292-295; Maor, *HaTenua HaTsiyonit B'Rusya*, pp. 287-288; Yaakov Goldstein, "HaHitgonenut, HaShmira V'Irgunei 'Bar Giora' V'HaShomer' BaAliya HaShniya," in *HaAliya HaShniya, Mehkarim*, Y. Bartal, ed. (Jerusalem, 1997), pp. 435-481; Yosef Gorny, "HaShinuyim B'Mivneh HaHevrat V'HaPoliti Shel 'HaAliya HaShniya' BaShanim 1904-1940," *HaTsiyonut*, 1 (1970), 231-232.
 - 54 Vital, *Zionism*, pp. 309-310, 313-20, 459-462, 467-475; Zipperstein, *Elusive Prophet*, pp. 211-212; Maor, *HaTenua HaTsiyonit B'Rusya*, pp. 315-319. Following the Helsingfors Conference, the Russian Ministry of Interior's Police Department concluded that Russia's Zionists had merged with "the movement for the liberation of Russia's peoples." This was a principal reason why on June 1, 1907, the Senate of Russia adopted a decision to ban all kinds of Zionist organizations in Russia. Lokshin, "Shaping of the Policy," 54.
 - 55 Maurice Wohlgelelnter, *Israel Zangwill: A Study* (New York, 1964), pp. 146-174; Weisbord, *African Zion*, p. 158. One month before Great Britain issued the Balfour Declaration, pledging that government to facilitate the establishment in Palestine of a "Jewish national home," Zangwill cautioned in the *Menorah Journal* that "either the Arabs must trek or there will be an Arabized Judea in no way corresponding with the Zionist dream." See A120/463, Central Zionist Archives (CZA), Jerusalem. For his subsequent favoring of equal national status between Jew and Arab in a "semitic Switzerland," rather than political Zionism, see *Speeches, Articles and Letters of Zangwill*, M. Simon, ed. (London, 1937), pp. 343-357.
 - 56 Israel Zangwill, *The Melting Pot* (New York, 1910). Zangwill himself would marry a Christian woman. Wohlgelelnter errs in quoting the British author as publishing an eyewitness account of the Kishinev Pogrom of 1903 (*Israel Zangwill*, p. 138). The citation, quoted in an appendix to a later edition of Zangwill's famous play, is taken from a nurse who witnessed a pogrom in Odessa some time after the massacre in Kishinev. See Israel Zangwill, *The Melting Pot* (London, 1914), pp. 190-191.
 - 57 *New York Times*, Sept. 12, 1908; reviews in A120/164-165, CZA; Wohlgelelnter, *Israel Zangwill*, pp. 174-186.
 - 58 Wohlgelelnter, *Israel Zangwill*, pp. 261-291; Zipperstein, *Elusive Prophet*, pp. 155-

- 157; Ginsburg (Ahad Ha'am) to Dubnow, Nov. 9, 1907, in *Ahad Ha'am, Mikhtavim B'Einei Eretz Yisrael, 1891-1926*, S. Laskov, ed. (Jerusalem, 2000), pp. 237-238; Ahad Ha'am, "The Negation of the Diaspora" (1909), in *The Zionist Idea*, Arthur Hertzberg, ed. (New York, 1964), pp. 270-277. For an extended analysis of the distinctions between Dubnow and Ahad Ha'am, see David H. Weinberg, *Between Tradition and Modernity: Haim Zhitlowski, Simon Dubnow, Ahad Ha-am and the Shaping of Modern Jewish Identity* (New York, 1996), chaps. 3-4.
- 59 *Sefer Shimon Dubnow*, pp. 335-336; Shimon Dubnow, "Historia Shel Ish Tsava Yehudi MiMa'arakhot Shnat 1915 – Vidui Shel Ehad MeiRabim," *HaTekufa*, 1 (1918), pp. 617-630; *Materialy dlia istorii antievreishikh pogromov v Rossii*, S. M. Dubnow and G. Ia. Krasnyi-Admoni, eds. (Petrograd). A second volume under the same title, published in Moscow in 1923, was devoted to the post-Kishinev pogroms.
- 60 Dubnow, "Historia Shel Ish Tsava Yehudi," p. 167; Gitelman, *A Century of Ambivalence*, pp. 99-106. Yeshayahu Klinov's account of pogroms that struck Ukrainian Jewry in 1920 was published by Bialik in the collection *Reshumot*. See Moshe Kol, *Morim V'Haverim* (Jerusalem, 1968), pp. 126-127.
- 61 Jabotinsky, *Autobiografia*, pp. 47-51, 68-72, 83-88; Ze'ev Jabotinsky, *Ketavim Tsiyonim Rishonim* (Jerusalem, 1949); Ze'ev Jabotinsky, *Feuilletonim* (Jerusalem, 1954), pp. 33-51; Jabotinsky, quoted in *Shirat H.N. Bialik*, p. 220; Refaela Bilski Ben-Hur, *Kol Yahid Hu Melekh, HaMahshava HaHevratit V'HaMedinit Shel Ze'ev Jabotinsky* (Tel Aviv, 1988), pp. 22-23, 183-184; Ze'ev Jabotinsky, *Al Sifrut V'Omanut* (Jerusalem, 1948), pp. 97-120; Ze'ev Jabotinsky, *Mikhtavim* (Tel Aviv, n.d.), p. 37.
- 62 Yosef Nedava, ed., *Ze'ev Jabotinsky: HaIsh U'Mishnato* (Tel Aviv, 1980); Penkower, *The Zionist Revolution*, pp. 120-132.
- 63 Bialik, *Shirim*, pp. 110-111, 166-167, 172-174, 186-187, 204-208, 218, 221-224, 261-264, 370-391; Yosef Klausner, *H.N. Bialik V'Shirat Hayav* (Tel Aviv, 1950), pp. 123-125; *Sefer Shimon Dubnow*, p. 336. Also see *Kol Kitvei Reuven Brainin ben Mordekhai Brainin*, 2 (New York, 1936), pp. 168; and Dan Meiron, *H. N. Bialik and the Prophetic Mode in Modern Hebrew Poetry* (Syracuse, 2000).
- 64 *Igrot H.N. Bialik*, p. 181; Yosef Oren, *Shevivim* (Tel Aviv, 1981), pp. 135-145. See also books cited in note 1. For Jabotinsky's later thoughts about Bialik's poetic silence, see Jabotinsky, *Al Sifrut V'Omanut*, pp. 263-279. For Bialik's lack of hope in the revolutions that engulfed Russia, see Hamutal Bar-Yosef, "Lanu HaYehudim Hashkafa Aheret': H. N. Bialik B'Zman HaMahapekhot B'Russya V'Yahaso LeRa'ayon HaMahapekha," in *MehVilna Ad L'Yerushalayim, Mehkarim B'Toldotehem VeTarbutam Shel Yehudei Mizrah Eiroa, Mugashim L'Professor Shmuel Verses*, D. Asaf, R. Shenfeld, and A. Holtman, eds. (Jerusalem, 2002), pp. 427-448.
- 65 Israel Zangwill, "The Jubilee of Bialik," n.d., A120/134, CZA; A. S. Orlans, "Siha Im H. N. Bialik" (n.d.), file 61, Yehoshua Ravnitski MSS. (4/1185), Jewish National Library, Jerusalem; *Igrot H.N. Bialik*, p. 180; H.N. Bialik, *Devarim ShehBa'al Peh*, 1-2 (Tel Aviv, 1935), esp. 1, pp. 49-55. Gorki was quoted a year before the Kishinev pogrom as follows: "I am told Zionism is a Utopia. I do not know; perhaps. But inasmuch as I see in this Utopia an unconquerable thirst for freedom, one for which

- the people will suffer, it is for me a reality. With all my heart, I pray that the Jewish people, like the rest of humanity, may be given spiritual strength to labor for its dream and to establish it in flesh and blood." *Maccabean*, Vol. 2 (April 1902), p. 213.
- 66 Avraham Broides, "B'Mehitsato Shel H.N. Bialik," *Measef: Mukdash L'Yetsirat H. N. Bialik*, 10, H. Barzel, ed. (Tel Aviv, 1975), pp. 350-352; Szold to sisters, July 20, 1934, Henrietta Szold files #1, Hadassah Archives, New York City. For Ahad Ha'am's singular influence on Bialik, see H. N. Bialik, *Shirim*, pp. 143-45; *Igrot H.N. Bialik*, p. 168; Bialik, *Devarim ShehBa'al Peh*, 2, pp. 191-210; and Aliza Klausner Bar, "Al Hashpa'ato Shel Ahad-Ha'am Al Hayim Nahman Bialik," *Measef: Mukdash L'Yetsirat H. N. Bialik*, 10, H. Barzel, ed. (Tel Aviv, 1975), pp. 315-333.
 - 67 Nedava, *Ze'ev Jabotinsky*, pp. 309-314; Ben-Gurion to Wauchope, July 9, 1934, David Ben-Gurion Archives, Sde Boker, Israel.
 - 68 Yaakov Fikhhmann, *Shirat Bialik* (Jerusalem, 1953), pp. 60, 83; Yaakov Fikhhmann, *Sefer Bialik* (Tel Aviv, 1934), pp. 141-158; Shazar, *Or Ishim*, pp. 135-141; Shimon Rawidowicz, *Sibotai Im Bialik* (Jerusalem, 1983), pp. 28-30; Boaz Arpeli, "Meot B'Shanim Yarku Eleh (HaGoyim) HaMetoavim B'Fanenu, VaAnahnu Mahinu Et HaRok': Bialik, Brenner, Atsag," *HaAretz* literary section, Oct. 10, 2003.
 - 69 Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse*, pp. 276-281; Shavit and Shamir, *B'Mevoei Ir HaHareiga*, p. 130; Grace Cohen Grossman, *Jewish Art* (New York, 1995), p. 282. The Israel Museum in Jerusalem featured Pann's "Jug of Tears" (not shown in seventy-five years), together with his later romantic pastels of biblical heroes and heroines, in the Fall-Winter 2003 season.
 - 70 Philip Guedella, *Supers and Supermen* (New York, 1924), p. 81; Anita Shapira, *Land and Power: The Zionist Resort to Force, 1881-1948* (New York, 1992), pp. 111, 176-177.
 - 71 Governing Council minutes, Mar. 30, 1933, Zionist Organization of America MSS., Box 2, AJHS; Jewish Agency Executive Jerusalem, Apr. 9, 1933, CZA; Hayim Greenberg, *The Inner Eye* (New York, 1953), pp. 219-229. On the other hand, Jabotinsky asserted that in light of the Palestinian Arab revolt, which began in April 1936, Bialik's call for self-defense in "B'Ir HaHareiga" now had to be replaced with the yishuv adopting an offensive ethos against such sustained attack. See Yaacov Shavit, ed., *Havlagat O Teguva* (Jerusalem, 1983), pp. 71-73.
 - 72 Greenberg, *The Inner Eye*, pp. 230-238; Leni Yahil, "The Warsaw Underground Press," in *Living With Antisemitism*, pp. 436-437; Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse*, pp. 207, 211-212; *Documents on the Holocaust*, Y. Arad, Y. Gutman, and A. Margaliot, eds. (Jerusalem, 1981), p. 433. And, speaking to Mapai youth in Palestine a few months before his death in August 1944, Labor Zionist ideologue Berl Katznelson emphasized the significance of the Kishinev pogrom, "B'Ir HaHareiga", and other related calls in 1903 as critical in stimulating armed resistance among Jewish youth in Russia and in Palestine. See *Kitvei Berl Katznelson*, pp. 36-38. *Kristallnacht*, the "Night of the Broken Glass" on November 9-10, 1938, witnessed the deportation of at least 30,000 Jews to Nazi concentration camps and the destruction of hundreds of synagogues, shops, and houses in Germany and Austria. Ninety-one Jews were reported dead, and many were severely wounded. Following that planned action, the

- Jews had to pay the Hitler government an “indemnity” of one billion Reichsmarks, as well as insurance benefits for their destroyed property (another 250 million Reichsmarks), and were completely evicted from German economic life.
- 73 Yitshak Zuckerman (“Antek”), *A Surplus of Memory: Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising*, B. Harshav, trans. and ed. (Berkeley, 1993), p. 72. On the eve of World War II, Dubnow saw no fundamental distinction between totalitarian rule and previous absolutist regimes, and maintained his faith in autonomous Jewish life in the Diaspora. See Y. Meirson, “Siha Im Professor Shimon Dubnov,” *Davar*, July 19, 1939.
 - 74 Dubnow, *Divrei Yemei Am Olam*, p. 300; *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 6 (Jerusalem, 1973), p. 252, and 10, p. 1068; Yehuda Bauer, *A History of the Holocaust* (New York, 1982), p. 335.
 - 75 Penkower, *The Emergence of Zionist Thought*, pp. 63-73; Eliezer Schweid, “The Rejection of the Diaspora in Zionist Thought: Two Approaches,” *Studies in Zionism*, 5 (spring 1984), pp. 43-70; Shalom Ratzaby, “The Polemic about the ‘Negation of the Diaspora’ in the 1930s and its Roots,” *Journal of Israeli History*, 16 (1995), 19-38; Shapira, *Land and Power*, pp. 330-341; Nili Keren, “The Impact of She’erit Hapletah on the Holocaust Consciousness of Israeli Society,” in *She’erit Hapletah, 1944-1948, Rehabilitation and Struggle*, Y. Gutman and A. Saf, eds. (Jerusalem, 1990), pp. 427-436; Yehiam Weitz, “Yishuv, Gola Shoa – Mitus U’Metsiut,” *Yahadut Zmanenu*, 6 (1990), pp. 133-150; Gershon Shaked, “Between the Western Wall and Masada: The Holocaust and the Self-Awareness of Israeli Society,” in Y. Gutman, ed., *Major Changes Within the Jewish People in the Wake of the Holocaust* (Jerusalem, 1996), pp. 553-566; Dalya Ofer, “Ma V’Ad Kama Lizkor Min HaShoa: Zikhron HaShoa B’Medinat Yisrael BaAsor HaRishon L’Kiyuma,” in *Atsmaut: 50 HaShanim HaRishonot*, A. Shapira, ed. (Jerusalem, 1998), pp. 171-193.
 - 76 Henry Roth, *Mercy of a Rude Stream: A Star Shines Over Mt. Morris Park* (New York, 1994), pp. 74-75. By contrast, Alexander Solzhenitsyn’s *Two Hundred Years Together* echoes the czarist version: a drunken mob, provoked by Jews, carried out an attack that left a very small number of victims. Witnesses did not confirm the “heartrending” details in the newspapers, which were nothing more than exaggerated stories on the part of the Russian revolutionaries, who took advantage of the pogrom as “an opportunity to attack the government.” See Boris Sandler, “The Reaction to the Kishinev Pogrom, Three Perspectives: Leo Trotsky, Vladimir Korolenko, and Alexander Solzhenitsyn,” Nov. 4, 2003, conference, YIVO, New York City.
 - 77 *Jerusalem Post*, May 29, 2003.
 - 78 Roskies, *Literature of Destruction*, p. 154.
 - 79 *Kitvei Yehuda Leib Gordon, Shira* (Tel Aviv, 1950), pp. 31, 103-111; Goren, *Eduyot Nifgaei Kishinev KeFi ShehNikhtevu Al Yedei H. N. Bialik V’Haverav*; Gershon Shaked, *The Shadows Within: Essays on Modern Jewish Writers* (Philadelphia, 1987), pp. 123-132. In May 1096, at the beginning of the Catholic Church’s First Crusade to redeem the Holy Land from Muslim rule, over 1,000 Jews died in Mainz (some at the hands of crusaders and many, after an armed and spirited resistance, by suicide as an act of sanctifying the Divine name, *Kiddush HaShem*). The synagogue and

Jewish quarter were also burned down. For Shaul Tschernihovsky's poetic response to that martyrdom, "Baruch of Mainz" (1902), which was hailed at the time as a prophetic response to the Kishinev pogrom, see Mintz, *Hurban*, pp. 123-129. Also see Yaakov Bahat, "Kiddush HaShem B'Yetsirato Shel Tchernihovsky," *Moznayim*, 17 (Nov. 1963), 432-437.

- 80 Adler and Margalioth, *With Firmness in the Right*, p. 264; *Mivhar Irgot Weizmann*, pp. 117-118; Chaim Weizmann, *Trial and Error* (New York, 1949), pp. 79-80.

**Rabbi Abraham Isaac Selmanovitz:
Guardian of Tradition**

ON DECEMBER 30, 1920, THE *SS KROONLAND* STEAMED INTO NEW York City harbor. Its voyage from Antwerp, the other end of the ship's standard round-trip route, had taken fifteen days. First launched by the Red Star line in 1902, the double smoke-stacked vessel disgorged several hundred immigrants from across Central and Eastern Europe into the cavernous reception halls of Ellis Island. To the question, "length of time alien intends to remain in the United States," every individual in the classification "steerage passengers only" responded in identical fashion: "always."

Among the throng of arrivals that cold Thursday was a Polish Jew who gave his name in English as "Abram Zelmanowicz." Registered on list number 6, line 12, of the *Kroonland's* manifest, this passenger stood out from the rest. At forty-three, he was about twenty years older than the average age of those who alighted from the crammed holds. Moreover, while the query "calling or profession" elicited from fellow travelers such answers as "peasant," "workman," "tailor," "laborer," "hairdresser," "housewife," and "none," Zelmanowicz answered "Rabin." The word was then rewritten as "Rabbi."

Several other details rounded out Zelmanowicz's replies to the U.S. immigration officer on duty that day. The married male in question could read and write Polish. "Polish" was also given for the two categories "nationality" and "race or people." Bielsk was entered as his last place of permanent residence, with Chana Zelmanowicz of that town his "nearest relative or friend" from Poland. Zelmanowicz paid his own passage, carried a total of \$10 on his person, and had never before been to the United States. This alien resident intended to join his father, listed as "Wigdar Zelman" of 19 Benson St. in Paterson, New Jersey. Planning to become an American citizen, Zelmanowicz averred that he had never been in prison, an almshouse, or an institution for the insane, and had never been supported by charity. Neither a polygamist nor an anarchist, he also did not believe in the overthrow of the U.S. government. He had not come through any "offer, solicitation, promise, or agreement" to work in the United States.

Finally, there was the issue of Zelmanowicz's appearance. The inspector

judged his condition of health, “mental and physical,” to be “good.” The rabbi was neither deformed nor crippled. He stood at 5 feet 6 inches, and his complexion was deemed “fair.” “Brown” described the color of his hair, “fair” the color of the eyes. No specific marks of identification received mention. The journeyer’s final entry supplied Lohrer, Poland, as his birthplace.¹

His personal odyssey to what East European Jews then called “*di goldene medina*” (the golden land) had been a long one; some of its details would be forever shrouded in the mists of time. While Zelmanowicz, for the *SS Kroonland’s* manifest, had provided 1877 as the year of his birth in Lohrer, family recollection cites 1887 and the Polish town of Tomashov. (This error was to be repeated in later Jewish publications.) In Poland, the lad studied with one of the generation’s most formidable talmudic scholars, the hasidic master Rabbi Abraham Bornstein of Sochaczew, known as the “*Avnei Nezer*” after his most famous work. Garnering plaudits as an *ilui* (genius in Torah) at the tender age of six, Zelmanowicz was encouraged to continue in his studies. The young man went on to earn *semikha* (rabbinical ordination at the *yoreh yoreh* instructional level) at the age of seventeen from Lodz’s chief rabbi, Elijah Hayim Meisel, who in 1873 had established the first *Talmud Torah* in Poland’s central textile city. Zelmanowicz was later granted a higher degree, *yadin yadin*, which permitted him to serve as a judge on a *beit din* (rabbinical court) and to issue divorces.²

One year after receiving *semikha*, Zelmanowicz married Chana Fuks of Opoczno, a town in central Poland. Like her groom, the young bride of sixteen could lay claim to a family of scholars who adhered to the formidable Gur (Yiddish: *Ger*) hasidic dynasty. Founded in 1859 by Isaac Meir Alter (the “*Hiddushei HaRim*”) in Gora Kalwaria, nineteen miles southeast of Warsaw, this particular school emphasized Torah study, profundity of thought, and continuous striving after self-perfection. Judah Aryeh Leib Alter, a grandson who became the *admor* (head) of Gur in 1870, similarly distinguished himself as a scholar of modest demeanor who also concerned himself with issues affecting Jewry in general.

Abraham and Chana’s first marital years were spent in her native hometown. Their union emerged from a “*shiddukh*,” an arranged marriage typical for their hasidic Orthodox circle, which had initially been prompted because Chana’s brother Berl was married to Abraham’s aunt Zirel. Yet romance blossomed early. According to family lore, when the intended husband was to visit her home for the first time, beautiful Chana looked out the window. Viewing an elderly gentleman approach, she cried. When

Abraham came in, however, and she saw the slender, handsome young man, Chana fell in love; he did as well. The couple would remain in Opoczno, numbering 2,425 Jews in 1897, for a few years. Abraham devoted his waking hours to learning in the *beit midrash* (study hall), his well-to-do in-laws providing the newlyweds a roof over their heads during that idyllic period.

During the next two decades, Zelmanowicz served as a *rav* (rabbi) in Poland. According to one grandson, Abraham first went to Radom in Kielce province, with father-in-law Fuks providing the necessary means for livelihood. Commerce and industry, *yeshivot* and welfare institutions – all could be found aplenty in that city, whose 24,465 Jews would make up one-third of its population in 1921. Another document places Zelmanowicz later on in the Warszawa province city of Plock (Plotsk in Russian), whose 7,352 Jews in 1921 could boast of a yeshiva and a Jewish high school. The small town of Bielsk in northeast Poland, which Zelmanowicz gave for the *SS Kroonland's* record as his last full-time residence on European soil, claimed under 2,400 Jews when the country's final, sovereign boundaries were determined in 1921.³

These were not encouraging years for Polish Jewry. The rise of nationalist fervor, accompanied by the development of a Polish middle class eager to oust Jewish *bourgeoisie* rivals, exacerbated Polish-Jewish relations. Jews constituted an overwhelmingly urban population in a country whose other major groups (Polish, Ukrainian, and Byelorussian) were primarily Catholic and rural. The founding of the National Democratic Party (Endecja) in 1897 was symptomatic of growing antisemitism, with extremist leader Roman Dmowski announcing a national boycott of Jewish businesses in 1912, when Jews actively supported a Socialist candidate for the Russian Duma. The masses of Jews, small shopkeepers and artisans who were Yiddish-speaking and Orthodox, drew constant assault as the cardinal enemy. The rebirth of Poland as a sovereign entity after World War I exacerbated matters. When Jews were caught between opposing armies – Poles versus Lithuanians in Vilna, Poles versus Ukrainians in Lvov, and Poles versus Bolsheviks during the War of 1920 – pogroms often would follow. Poles bitterly accused Jews of being pro-Ukrainian in eastern Galicia or of being allied with the Russian Bolsheviks. A falling birthrate and a more serious economic decline, the latter dictated by the policies of the new Polish state, would rapidly ensue for this Jewish community in the interwar years.⁴

Wisely, Zelmanowicz looked to emigrate. Mounting crises in Poland, where Jews numbered at least ten percent of the population, included the

personal, vivid memory of Jewish families being shot down in cold blood during a local pogrom. Hearing the approach of stomping boots on that occasion, Chana quickly hid her sons in the house garret until danger passed. In addition, Abraham had to consider supporting a very large family. Eight children had been born to Chana and Abraham during these same years. Esther, the oldest, was followed by the boys Simha Bunim, Moshe, Aryeh Leib, and Yaakov, and then daughters Miriam, Brakha, and Ita.

America seemed the logical haven, since Abraham's father had moved to the States prior to World War I. There, with his wife Yehudis (Judith), their other son and five daughters, patriarch Avigdor (Victor in English) took up permanent residence in Paterson. Resuming work as a *shohet* (ritual slaughterer), which he had first practiced in Lodz, Avigdor listed his trade in the 1920 U.S. Federal Census as "rabbi." He had remarried by then, his first wife having died of influenza two years earlier during the great worldwide epidemic. To stave off local antisemitism, the sixty-two-year-old *shohet* had decided to shorten his family name to "Selman"; the six other children retained this change thereafter. Understandably, New Jersey would be Abraham's first destination in America. First, however, he would make the arduous trek alone, leaving Chana and family in the care of her brother in Opoczno until they could be summoned to a new life.⁵

The Zelmanowicz clan proceeded with all necessary steps to become yet another story in "the great immigration" saga. Some 2,378,000 Jews, the great bulk from the Russian empire, arrived in the United States between 1880 and the end of free immigration in 1925; by then close to 25 percent of world Jewry called America home. As his immediate family's pioneer in this epoch-making movement, Abraham quickly filed a Declaration of Intention "in good faith to become a citizen of the United States of America and to permanently reside therein: SO HELP ME GOD." Before William F. Schneider, Clerk of the Supreme Court of New York County, "Abraham Isaac Zelmanovitz," giving his birthdate as April 30, 1877, his height as 5 feet 7 inches, his hair and eyes as brown, and his weight as 160 lbs., duly informed the U.S. Department of Labor's Naturalization Service on March 29, 1921, that he resided at 61 W. 115th St. in Manhattan. It was, the applicant asserted, his true intention "to renounce forever all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty, and particularly to 'The Republic of Poland' and Russia," of which he was a subject. His wife, noted here as "Anna" and currently living in "Russia," would now finalize preparations to follow her life's mate.⁶

Chana, along with “Lejb” (11), “Jakob” and “Marjam” (both listed as 9, though she was 8), and “Brucha” (7), set sail on the *SS Zeeland* from Antwerp on September 29, 1921. Tickets had also been purchased for Esther (declared 21, yet actually about to celebrate her 20th birthday) and Ita (2). Since, however, Ita’s sudden attack of measles forced the two girls to remain in Poland, a line was drawn through their names on the ship’s manifest. Arriving in New York City on October 9th, Chana indicated that her “calling or occupation” was “wife,” that she possessed \$87, could read Hebrew, and was a Polish citizen from Bielsk. Her “race” or “people” was registered as “Hebrew.” She gave New York as the group’s final destination, with husband “A. Zelmanowicz” residing at 61 W. 115th St. A doctor present certified that this new arrival (together with the four children) suffered from “malnutrition – special example.” She was described as being 5 feet 3 inches tall, of “fair” complexion, with dark hair and eyes, and having no distinctive marks of identification.⁷

“Benjamin” and “Moszak” Zelmanowicz reached Ellis Island on October 11 aboard the *SS France*, six days after leaving Le Havre. “Benjamin” declared himself 16, although in fact he would soon be 19 according to his father’s official registry of “Binen” (Simha Bunim – now Benjamin) in 1927; the younger brother’s age was properly inscribed (17). Each had \$25, with “Moszak” listed as “workman” and Benjamin’s trade given as “none.” “Moszak” was headed for “father Abraham Zelmanowicz,” while Benjamin’s destination was written as “father Wigder Zelman.” Esther and Ita followed on the *SS Gothland*, which departed Antwerp on October 23. Landing in New York two weeks later, Esther gave “housework” for her trade, and noted that she and Ita jointly owned \$49 and that their father’s name was “A. Selmanowitz.” All of these four arrivals received the evaluation “good” for their condition of health.⁸

How long the reunited family stayed on Manhattan’s upper West Side is uncertain, as are their subsequent peregrinations until the latter half of the decade. The apartment Abraham chose at 61 W. 115th St. appeared suitable at first. Located between Fifth and Lenox Avenues just north of Central Park, the building bordered upon a sizeable Jewish enclave in Harlem. But that distinctive ethnic presence, at its height 100,000-strong, peaked by 1925. A daughter recalls that the ten-member clan moved downtown for one year, to a residential hotel on East Broadway in the heart of the Lower East Side. That neighborhood, which in 1915 sheltered an estimated 350,000 Jews in less than two square miles, had long passed its prime as European Jewry’s

epicenter abroad. Many Jews left the teeming area for Brownsville, Flatbush, Crown Heights, and the Grand Concourse. Not Abraham and Chana, who first moved to 251 Division St. and then gave up their sojourner status for good in April 1926 with the purchase of a three-story house (20' x 100') on Rodney Street in Williamsburg.⁹

The first significant mention of 214 Rodney Street in the family biography surfaces on February 24, 1927, the day that its head became an American citizen. Abraham's petition for naturalization to the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York, accompanied by the earlier Declaration of Intent and official confirmation of his arrival at Ellis Island, gave this home address and his occupation as "rabbi." Having supplied the birthdates of the entire family, the applicant renounced fealty to his former country of allegiance in particular, "The Republic of Poland & (or) The Present Government of Russia." He proceeded to sign his full name in a clear hand as "Abraham Isaac Selmanovitz" to an oath to "support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic." Two witnesses endorsed an affidavit attesting to Selmanovitz's *bona fides*, and certificate no. 2380356, approved by Judge Inch, became thereby an integral part of the country's history.¹⁰

With the move to Williamsburg, Abraham had arrived in his element. A choice location before World War I for wealthy industrialists and professionals, including some German-born Jews, the district in the 1920s became an Orthodox Jewish community of the moderate Ashkenazic Russian-Polish type. By 1930, two-thirds of the approximately 20,000 people who lived there were Jews of the lower and lower-middle class. Hasidic Galician and Polish Jews of Selmanovitz's background began to settle in great numbers. Synagogues, makeshift hasidic *shteibels* for prayer and learning, Hebrew schools, and sundry Jewish organizations dotted the landscape. Yeshivah Torah Voda'ath, later to achieve national renown among Orthodox Jewry, was founded. Beards, *pe'ot* (earlocks), and *yarmulkas* dominated; kosher stores could be found alongside dance halls, movie theatres, and poolrooms for the young.¹¹

Selmanovitz quickly became the head of the small Gerer community there. His ties to the rebbe at that time, Abraham Mordecai Alter (the "*Imrei Emes*"), had begun when he had been a boy studying in the Gur yeshiva in Warsaw. Abraham's bed in the dormitory was next to that of the young Alter, eldest son of Judah Leib. Selmanovitz later remembered being awakened one night when he heard the prospective father-in-law of Abraham Alter

come to view the boy as he slept. Once the latter became *rebbe*, he gave Gur hasidim a dynamic, organized framework of schools and organizations, even while exploring the possibility of moving with his followers to Palestine. Like Torah chieftains Jacob Willowski (*Ridbaz*) and Israel Meir HaKohen (*Hafetz Hayyim*), Alter saw little hope for Orthodoxy in the United States. He requested Selmanovitz to care for the small contingent, perhaps 100, of Gerer hasidim there; family members recall Selmanovitz refusing the role of Gerer Rebbe in America, saying that one must be born to the position rather than be appointed.¹²

Selmanovitz assumed leadership of two Williamsburg congregations, Talmud Torah Anshei Emes and Beth Aaron Anshei S'fard. In the former, at 326 Keap St., he was the recognized rabbi. As such, he received a small salary, sat near the Torah ark, and addressed those present at the times usually set aside for rabbinic homilies and speeches. In the second shul, known locally as "*der Poilisher Shteibel*," he served as *rav* and the recognized leader of the *minyán* (quorum for prayer) of Gerer hasidim, many of whom were among the original organizers in 1910.¹³

The Poilisher Shteibel on Division Avenue became the true hub of Orthodox Jews in the neighborhood. The *mikveh* (ritual bath) in the basement, for a long time the only one available in Williamsburg, was built under Selmanovitz's supervision; he, Rav Yitzhak Bunim, and the Novominsker Rebbe, Yehuda Aryeh Perlow, certified its validity according to *halakha* (Jewish law). Upstairs, past a steep staircase leading to the first floor, the din of voices coming from a mix of voluntary instructors, young students, professionals, and everyday workers reflected the exhilaration of Torah study. *Sefarim*, religious volumes that were strewn across each table and stacked from floor to ceiling, were in use day and night. Eyeglasses, stored in several cigar boxes, and cups of tea were handed out by the impressive-looking Reb Chazkel Engelman to those in need. An air of passion and commitment to a deeper understanding of Torah, palpable and never forgotten by those witness to the scene, reigned in these lively quarters.¹⁴

Selmanovitz would join the hasidim at the Poilisher Shteibel in the traditional *shalosh seudos* (or *shaleshudis*) held late Saturday afternoon between the *minha* (afternoon) and *ma'ariv* (evening) services. On various other occasions, when not required to occupy his pulpit on Keap St., Selmanovitz would join the minyan of Gerer hasidim. Every year at the close of Yom Kippur services, he would go to the Poilisher Shteibel for *ne'ila* (closing) prayers, the final segment of this most solemn day in the Jewish calendar.¹⁵

In both Williamsburg shuls, Selmanovitz's tasks as leading cleric were many and varied. He answered questions of ritual, performed weddings, gave regular classes, and helped provide for the welfare of his charges. As a judge in a rabbinic court, he also granted divorces and ruled on cases brought before those assembled. In his capacity as the *rav* of these two congregations, he was subsequently elected to the first vice-presidency of the *Agudas HaRabbonim*, the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada. The oldest organization of Orthodox rabbis in the country, established in 1902 by rabbis trained in Eastern Europe, this group would become increasingly involved in all matters affecting the Orthodox in America, who were still relatively weak.¹⁶

Selmanovitz is remembered as displaying keen judgment in the course of performing his communal tasks. One time, a couple asked him to officiate at their wedding. The young woman came with her parents; the young man was alone. The rabbi questioned the prospective groom as to his Hebrew name and antecedents, but was unhappy with the answers. Selmanovitz then asked the young man to accompany him upstairs. When the latter realized that he would be required to show physical proof that he was a member of the circumcised covenant of Abraham, he confessed that he was not Jewish. The marriage did not proceed.

On another occasion, a childless older couple came to Selmanovitz seeking to arrange a divorce. He proceeded, since according to Jewish law, a couple has the right to divorce if no children are born with the passage of ten years. In time, however, the rabbi realized that the couple cared deeply for each other and were unhappy apart. They returned to his study and he performed the remarriage.¹⁷

Selmanovitz was also called upon to answer queries as to the status of ritually slaughtered chickens. Housewives would come to his house with animals which they thought were of dubious *kashrut*. He frequently ruled that the chickens were kosher, using all the leniencies allowed by Jewish law. When questioned about this tendency, the rabbi explained that when he would arrive at the *Beit Din Shel Ma'ala* (the Court of Judgment on high), he did not want to answer for bearing the responsibility of preventing a poor woman from having a chicken to feed her family for the Sabbath.

In a related incident, a chicken of ambiguous *kashrut* was brought to him. Selmanovitz put it on the kitchen table, and then had to leave the room with the chicken lying unattended. Upon returning, he found the chicken not there. The ubiquitous cats of Williamsburg, kept for chasing

mice, had dragged the chicken to the back yard, thereby rendering it non-kosher. Responded the rabbi: "The cat has *paskened* the *shayla*" (ruled on the question).¹⁸

Understandably, Selmanovitz joined attempts to obtain effective *kashrut* supervision in New York City and beyond. His active involvement in getting out the Jewish vote for Fiorello LaGuardia's successful mayoralty campaigns aided in this regard. Earlier attempts at overseeing Jewish dietary practice in the metropolis had proven a resounding failure, given extensive fraud, competition between Orthodox rabbis and organizations for valuable endorsements, and the lack of a powerful enforcement agency. Selmanovitz threw his full support behind a *kashrut* campaign, spearheaded by Shimon Shain of the Poilisher Shteibel, aimed at Williamsburg and environs. He also labored for the creation, which took place in 1934, of a Kosher Law Enforcement Bureau incorporated within the New York State Department of Agriculture, as well as a *kashrut* advisory board representing the Jewish community. In time, his son Leib (Louis) would work as an inspector for that department's *kashrut* division and ultimately be named to head the division.¹⁹

Soon after moving to Rodney St., Selmanovitz began teaching at the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS) in New York. He had been recommended to that position by the Talmud luminary Rabbi Moshe HaLevi Soloveitchik. The latter, a member of a brilliant dynasty of Torah masters from Lithuania with links to Rabbi Hayyim of Volozhin, the outstanding pupil of the 18th century's *Gaon* Elijah of Vilna, had earlier conferred *semikha* on one of Selmanovitz's uncles. He and Abraham established close contact in Warsaw, where Soloveitchik headed the Talmud department of the Tahkemoni Rabbinical Seminary sponsored by the Mizrachi religious-Zionist movement. Soloveitchik recommended to Dr. Bernard Revel, president of RIETS, that his friend be invited to join the teaching staff of the Orthodox seminary that had been founded in 1897 on the Lower East Side.²⁰

Revel, himself an acknowledged *talmid hakham* (Torah scholar) from Lithuania, had also, in 1911, received the first doctoral degree granted by Philadelphia's Dropsie College. After a stint with his wife's family in the Oklahoma oil refinery business, he began reorganizing RIETS in 1915, opening it to laymen and teachers, as well as rabbinical students. In 1916, Revel founded Talmudical Academy, the first combined yeshiva-high school in the United States where a full program of Hebrew and English studies was

taught. Yeshiva College, the first institution of higher learning to embrace Jewish religious and secular studies and thus integrate Orthodoxy with American life, would open twelve years later. To strengthen RIETS, Revel sought a scholar who could appeal both to young men of Polish hasidic background and to the majority of students from *Litvisheh* (Lithuanian) roots. With Soloveitchik's warm support, he offered the post of *rosh yeshiva* (Talmud lecturer) and *mashgiach* (role model and guide) to Selmanovitz; in 1927, his employment began.²¹

The new appointee who moved about the *beit midrash* cut an impressive figure. His pleasant face wreathed in a full black beard, the well-groomed Selmanovitz appeared tall in stature. He always wore a substantial satin *yarmulka* atop his head and a hasidic *kapoteh* (Prince Albert coat). Aside from teaching his own pupils, Selmanovitz advised students on matters of personality and character, an integral part of their religious training. His Galician-sounding Yiddish led to much joshing, in which he took part, since it differed markedly from the Lithuanian pronunciation common to the bulk of RIETS's student body. Yet the friendly and outgoing individual won much respect, exhibiting shrewdness in evaluating students and in establishing close relationships with the brightest among them. In turn, Selmanovitz received a gift from each graduating class as a token of its admiration.²²

Some who came under his supervision at RIETS recall Selmanovitz's practical approach in helping them prepare for examinations. Review sessions were held to study those subjects most emphasized in rabbinic practice. These focused on questions and problems relating to dietary laws, ritual slaughter, marriage, and divorce. As one of the *roshei yeshiva* who conducted the reviews, he was always available to answer queries and to indulge in intensive discussions clarifying these matters. A former student graphically remembered Selmanowitz bringing in the lungs of a cow, and blowing them up to show the future clergymen the difference between a kosher animal and one that was *treif* (non-kosher) based upon abnormalities in the lungs.²³

In addition to his academic duties in RIETS, located in Washington Heights as of 1928 along with the new Yeshiva College, Selmanovitz acted as an informal congregational rabbi to the students and to local residents. He would answer what were popularly referred to as *teppel* (pot) and *leffel* (spoon) questions. These queries dealt with daily life, the problems of religious practice that would arise in the everyday actions of fellow Jews.

Local housewives would even bring their chickens into the *beit midrash*, in order to ascertain whether or not the chicken was kosher. Once secular college classes took over, usually around 3 P.M., Selmanovitz headed back on the long train ride home to Williamsburg.²⁴

In 1929, the rabbi traveled to Palestine and Europe. While in Eretz Israel he also visited the Slobodka yeshiva branch in Hebron, where some fellows who had previously been enrolled in RIETS were studying. Shortly after his visit, two of them were among the sixty-seven Jews killed there on the Sabbath in a pogrom perpetrated by local Arabs. As a result of this trip, his attitude toward the secular Zionists who were dubbed the “*halutsim*” (pioneers) was positive. Subsequently, in discussing these youngsters who were building up the Land of Israel, Selmanovitz became angry when they were criticized for contravening Torah. In the end, he averred, the secularists would do *teshuvva* (repent) and comply with Torah law. Then and later, Selmanovitz was known as an *ohav Yisrael* (lover of the Jewish people).²⁵

Traveling on across Europe, he met with several distinguished rabbis. In Paris, he visited with Rabbi Joel Herzog, father of the future first Ashkenazic chief rabbi of the State of Israel. Herzog expressed admiration for RIETS, and hoped that his son Isaac, then chief rabbi of the Irish Free State, would have the opportunity to meet with this guest from across the Atlantic. Selmanovitz stopped off in Frankfurt-am-Main, Germany, for a Sabbath, where he was acknowledged from the pulpit by Rabbi Joseph Breuer, noted head of the local Orthodox Jewish community. In Warsaw, he visited with Rabbi Moses Soloveitchik, then ill and awaiting official permission to enter America with his family and assume the post of senior *rosh yeshiva* at RIETS. He also spent time with his own family and that of his daughter-in-law, Esther, who had married Benjamin in New York City three years earlier. Returning to the United States via the port city of Trieste, Selmanovitz was recognized in the synagogue, whose Sabbath service included a prayer for the welfare of the Yeshiva.²⁶

Apprised of the trip, Revel had reason to value Selmanovitz's special contribution to RIETS's welfare. Aside from his own teaching, the Polish-born *rosh yeshiva* kept the institution's president informed about the progress of Soloveitchik's classes and the progress of the students in general. A 1935 letter indicates that, as *mashgiach*, he also felt compelled to acknowledge the absence of some dormitory residents from the daily morning *minyan*. Most significantly, as a member of the *Agudas HaRabbonim* presidium, Selmanovitz served as an important bridge to that European-oriented body.

At the same time that the financially strapped Yeshiva reeled under the Great Depression, a harried Revel had to contend with attacks leveled by the *Agudas HaRabbonim* and other Yiddish-speaking Orthodox elements. This right-wing faction persistently frowned upon Revel's effort at synthesizing religious and secular studies; the *Agudas HaRabbonim* also resented the professional competition posed by RIETS's graduates to its membership. Buttressed by critiques against Yeshiva from some talmudic sages of Eastern Europe, the Union of Orthodox Rabbis regularly questioned the American institution's true commitment to strict Torah practice.²⁷

Of his colleagues at RIETS, Selmanovitz maintained the closest friendship with Soloveitchik, one year his senior. Theirs was a unique bond, built upon mutual respect, as well as trust in and love for the same religious values. Soloveitchik's daughter later described seeing her father and Selmanovitz, framed by the large windows in the RIETS study hall, oblivious to all as they engaged in conversation. No matter that one typified the *litvak* (Lithuanian Jew) and the other the *hasid*, with their Yiddish accents most pointedly in contrast. Soloveitchik's youngest son later confirmed that they acted as brothers toward one another. When Soloveitchik's oldest son, Joseph Baer, was installed as chief rabbi of Boston in December 1932, Selmanovitz was invited to attend the ceremony along with such distinguished personages as Rabbi Ze'ev Gold, president of the American Mizrahi movement, and Rabbi Meir Berlin (later Bar-Ilan), president of the world Mizrahi movement.²⁸

At the end of 1940, Revel became seriously ill, passing away on December 2. The board of directors immediately began a search for a new president. Rabbi Soloveitchik felt that his oldest son, an acknowledged talmudic authority and a Ph.D. graduate in Philosophy from the University of Berlin, would be the best choice for Yeshiva College. He met an especially sympathetic ear in Selmanovitz, but Soloveitchik died suddenly on January 31, 1941, after being hospitalized for a relatively minor ailment. Yeshiva now needed both a president and a senior *rosh yeshiva*. In Jewish tradition, a son who is capable of assuming the position held by his father is automatically thought suitable to succeed as heir. Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik was eminently qualified to follow his father in the position of *Rosh HaYeshiva*, the argument advanced by Rabbi Herbert S. Goldstein of RIETS and leader of the West Side Institutional Synagogue. Many times the father expressed the wish that his oldest son should succeed him when the time came. That hour had now arrived.

Some of those involved in the Yeshiva College administration, however, thought that in the “New World” a different model could be used. They frowned upon the automatic succession of Rabbi J. B. Soloveitchik to his father’s place. Rabbi Leo Jung, a faculty member who also led the influential Jewish Center on Manhattan’s West Side, nominated talmudist and Bible scholar Dr. Chaim Heller of RIETS. From a separate quarter, *Agudas HaRabbonim* president Rabbi Eliezer Silver, while backing Joseph Baer, telegraphed Yeshiva that his colleagues were prepared to step in and reset the institution’s priorities.²⁹

Selmanovitz, active in RIETS and the *Agudas HaRabbonim*, participated in the deliberations concerning the two most important positions at Yeshiva. He strongly advocated insuring the proper place for his dear friend’s son. The talents exhibited by Selmanovitz in negotiation and persuasion, coupled with his intelligent, friendly manner, made a positive impression. Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik’s son later remembered his parents speaking of Selmanovitz with warmth and affection, and referring to him as “a foreign minister.” His quiet, diplomatic skills carried weight.

After considerable discussion, the Yeshiva board invited Joseph Baer to serve in his late father’s stead for one-year, “during which time he was to prove his usefulness,” but only if he agreed to waive his right of succession. A month later he accepted. Rabbi Samuel Belkin, another European-trained Torah scholar and Ph.D. (from Brown University), became Yeshiva’s dean and (in 1943) president. Once in place and over the next four decades, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik (“the *Rov*,” as thousands of disciples would later call him) came to personify Revel’s credo for Yeshiva *par excellence*.³⁰

The outbreak of World War II provided another chapter in Selmanovitz’s life, probably the most dramatic. In September 1939, his beloved *rebbe* of Gur, along with his entire household, moved to Warsaw. Upon the entry of the German *Wehrmacht* forces into Poland’s largest city, Abraham Mordecai Alter and family were hidden in order to evade the Gestapo. These secret state police of Hitler’s Third Reich were specifically searching for the “*wunder rabbiner*” (wonder rabbi), by then head of 100,000 hasidim, without success. The Gur entourage continued to elude capture while remaining underground. In fact, the last contact that the Gerer Rebbe had with his American adherents was the bar mitzvah gift which reached Selmanovitz’s eldest grandchild, Benjamin’s son Victor, in the spring of 1940. The present consisted of a set of inscribed *humashim* (the Pentateuch) and a set of *tefillin* (phylacteries).³¹

Some American Jewish circles quickly realized that this representative symbol of Orthodox Jewry should be saved without delay. Selmanovitz was among the organizers of a committee that already set to work in October 1939 for the *rebbe's* rescue. To facilitate the escape of the individual he termed "the *tsaddik* [righteous man] of the generation," they resorted to political pressure and raising funds across the United States. Selmanovitz put aside his daily pursuits and devoted himself fully to this mission. The members of the Poilisher Shtiebel proved natural allies in what was to follow.³²

Rabbi Menahem Kasher, distinguished author of *Torah Sheleima* and *de facto* head of the Gerer community in New York, went to Washington for help. Another active participant was Mordecai Goldman, who at Alter's suggestion had opened a store, *Otsar HaSefarim* (treasury of books), on the Lower East Side in 1919 to service the religious community's ritual needs. Two others on the committee were Gerer hasidim Chaim Fisch and Benjamin Ze'ev Hendeles, an active member of Agudas Israel, the Orthodox party founded in 1912, which Alter had strongly advocated as an antidote to Zionism and secular influences in general. The Bienenfeld brothers (one an uncle of Benjamin Selmanowitz's wife), wholesale suppliers of glass for the East Coast and chief funders of the Gur yeshiva in Jerusalem, served as well.

This committee placed a small notice in the religious Yiddish press announcing its purpose; an immediate and positive reaction followed. The dynamic head of Yeshiva Torah VoDa'ath, Rabbi Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz, joined without delay. *Agudas HaRabbonim's* Rabbi Eliezer Silver, instrumental soon after the war erupted in founding the Orthodox Va'ad HaHatsala rescue organization, maintained close contact in the matter with Selmanovitz. Silver became head of the fund-raising committee and, as a prominent Cincinnati resident, contacted Senator Robert Taft of Ohio. The influential Republican congressman in turn inquired of Secretary of State Cordell Hull as to the Gerer *Rebbe's* current plight.³³

In Washington, Kasher approached Congressman Sol Bloom of New York, head of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. Although a Jew, Bloom was not persuaded as to Alter's significance. Only with the intervention of former Supreme Court Justice Louis Dembitz Brandeis, who realized the importance of this personage for the future of Orthodox Jewry, did Bloom consent to intervene. Although the country maintained neutrality in the war at this point, its relations with Germany were strained. Accordingly, Bloom and the rescue committee concluded that it would be best to contact the U.S. ambassador to Italy in this regard. It was decided to resort to Italians

in order to obtain transit visas through Italy (thence to Palestine), and to handle the bribe that would ultimately reach the Gestapo officials directly involved.

In the meantime, Dr. Chaim Shoshkes, a well-known journalist and community leader who had been a member of the *Judenrat* (German-appointed Jewish Council) in Warsaw, escaped Poland via forged papers and arrived in New York. He carried a concealed note with the address of Goldman's bookstore on Essex St. The note was signed by Rabbi Isaac Meir Levin, Alter's son-in-law, who had left the *Judenrat* to go into hiding once the Nazis showed an inordinate amount of interest in him and his family. Reading the note, "It is necessary to save the *Admor Shlita* (leader who should live to a good and long life) immediately because it is a truly life-threatening situation," the committee redoubled its efforts. Kasher took the train a number of times to the nation's capital, even camping out in Bloom's office on the Sabbath. This last gesture convinced the congressman of the seriousness of the situation, and he agreed to undertake sustained diplomatic initiatives.

While the Italian consul in Warsaw was notified, it also became necessary to assure an effective exit route for the *rebbe*. The representative of the Italian shipping line in Poland, a Polish count, had dealt with Alter a few years earlier when the latter had traveled to Palestine. This shipping line had been used on a regular basis by Polish Jews, since they could easily travel to Trieste and then embark on a ship to Eretz Israel. At the time of his last trip in 1935, every courtesy had been extended to Alter. He was remembered with great respect and veneration.³⁴

At this crucial moment, a postcard to "*Ameryka*" reached "Rabbi A. Selmanowicz" at 214 Rodney St. The sender, "Mendel Alter," signing his name "M. Alter," added nothing more than a Warsaw address: Pawia 11a, m.13. Unwittingly, the Gestapo, in approving the mail by stamping a Nazi symbol on the recipient's address, had transmitted the *rebbe's* hiding place in the Praga suburb of Warsaw. This precious information was then given to a representative in Warsaw of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, who was able to visit the aged, ailing leader and tell him of the efforts being made in America on his behalf.

The Polish aristocrat enlisted the services of a young Italian engineer, who agreed to travel to Warsaw, deal with the Germans, and personally escort the *rebbe* and his entourage to safety. Not long thereafter, the anxious committee in New York received a telephone call from Rome: the engineer

would contact them that same evening. At 2 a.m., the entire group, meeting in Selmanovitz's home, heard that the Gestapo had demanded an exorbitant amount in American dollars. And unless his fee was doubled, the engineer would not return to Warsaw. Shoshkes urged those present not to yield to this ultimatum. Selmanovitz quickly rose from his chair, and motioned to Shoshkes not to be so inflexible. The war of nerves lasted twenty minutes, when the engineer agreed to accept a much smaller remuneration than he had originally stipulated. Eventually, Alter and some members of his family, after considerable obstacles and danger, reached the safety of Eretz Israel.³⁵

Selmanovitz's understandable joy, like that of his committee colleagues, was tempered by the horrific annihilation since termed the Holocaust. Rare, indeed, was this achievement of *pidyon shevuyim* (redeeming Jewish captives) in his people's most anguished years. The war prevented Benjamin and Esther from carrying out a planned visit to her parents in Poland. Nathan Fuks (Chana's brother) and wife Chaya were murdered by the Nazis in 1940, Nathan hanged in the town square for underground resistance activity. In March, 1941, Selmanovitz dispatched three \$7 packages of food to Chana's family in Opoczno, officially listed as being in "German Poland," via the Agudas Israel relief campaign. Before long, all contact was lost; half of her kin would perish in the *Shoa*.³⁶

The toll exacted on Abraham was considerable. Resolute faith precluded a questioning of his God. Yet a test in wartime of New York City's siren system frightened the rabbi so that he sought refuge in the house cellar. His predilection for Camels cigarettes intensified as well, singed fingertips turning yellow from nicotine in these same years. Poignantly, when about to escort his youngest child down the aisle to her wedding canopy, Selmanovitz explained why all the lights in Brooklyn's Grand Paradise Hall ballroom should be put on: "The whole world is dark. Let there be light. My daughter is getting married!"³⁷

Confronted by a deafening silence from Washington vis-à-vis the methodical murder of European Jewry, Selmanovitz joined 400 Orthodox rabbis in an unprecedented march on the Capitol on October 6, 1943. The date was chosen to coincide with the ten Days of Penitence preceding Yom Kippur. After presenting a petition to Vice President Henry Wallace on the steps of the Senate that called for rescue without delay, the bearded, gabardined assembly heard one of their number chant Hebrew prayers at the Lincoln Memorial (to the tune of the "Star-Spangled Banner") for Hitler's primary victims. From there the patriarchal-looking group silently

proceeded to the White House for an expected interview with President Franklin D. Roosevelt, long venerated by the American Jewish community. Told that the chief executive had “other business,” they trudged to Union Station for trains home. (FDR, in fact, left 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. to dedicate some bombers to the Yugoslav forces.) When the bells of victory pealed across the Allied world in May 1945, the Selmanovitz clan, like fellow Jews everywhere, had little cause for celebration. Among the victims of Adolf Hitler’s “Final Solution” of “the Jewish question” was the vibrant Gerer community of Poland.³⁸

As in past decades, the couple’s mutual love and regard evident to all, Chana stood by Abraham’s side throughout the difficult times of the Great Depression and World War II. Raised in the East European *milieu* of Jews who especially valued the pious scholar, she always referred to the dignified-looking rabbi as “her *sefer Torah*.” He, on the other hand, was devoted since their wedding to a woman who served as wife, mother, and custodian of tradition in this punctiliously Orthodox home. He frequently brought jewelry to the woman he adored, heartily fulfilling the precept of honoring a wife by buying her gifts. It was not beyond Abraham to clear the table and wash the dishes, or to prepare a glass of tea and some cake for Chana, so that his tired helpmate could sit and rest her legs, heavily wrapped in elasticized gauze due to severe edema. Their shared values permeated the two lives, best glimpsed in a lively table on Shabbat and religious holidays. Melodies, usually of Gerer origin, filled the dining room. The stories with which Selmanovitz, dressed especially in a black *kapoteh*, regaled his invitees contributed to the distinctive atmosphere.

Abraham always took the view that “his wife was the boss in the house and he was the boss outside.” Chana was a good cook and usually could be found in the kitchen, preparing food for the large family and for many visitors. Fridays saw carp swimming in the bathtub, to be killed on site for fresh gefilte fish. Chicken soup with light, Polish-style *kneidlach*; pastries thin-crust and sweet; *petcha* (calves-foot jelly) with hot prunes and raisins – all were served to the many hasidim who came for Shabbat. The front parlor room had a long table at which the family and the many guests who came were seated for meals. It was also one of the two studies that Selmanovitz had in the house, both book lined. Their grandchildren remember coming to a home filled with volumes everywhere and papers loaded on a large roll-top desk, to grandparents who were always busy but able to express great love for their family. Sunday was the day they visited most often at 214 Rodney

St., when children and grandchildren came together and got to know each other well.³⁹

To his own children, Selmanovitz was a warm, gentle father. Duties in the local rabbinical court from early morning to late evening left little time during the week for paternal attention. Fortunately, Shabbat and *yamim tovim* (religious holidays) offered welcome respite from this demanding schedule. With clan seated around the table, he then paid heed to their individual matters and would raise topics for discussion – usually in Yiddish, such as reasons for affirming that humanity has a higher nature than the beast. Any sneeze or sore throat prompted his devoted, nursing care. Requests were also made by telegram to the Gerer *Rebbe* for a blessing on special occasions. And though a number of the children eventually rejected their *heder* (elementary school), Rabbi Jacob Joseph Yeshiva, and Bais Ya'akov education, the rabbi chose neither to see imperfection nor to sit in judgment.⁴⁰

A simple yet profound response on one occasion to his nephew, Jerry (Yehuda) Selman, reflected Selmanovitz's particular outlook. When the then six-year-old visited Rodney Street with his father, the rabbi interrupted a class, called over Selman, and asked about his Hebrew lessons. The youngster answered that they were pretty good, but that he did not like the history of the Jews – kings and wars, and kings who ruled without belief. Commented Selmanovitz: "Beliefs change all the time, like the seasons. It gives you something to expect, to think about. But you, yourself, must shift your doubts and beliefs into knowing in your heart of hearts."⁴¹

In some ways, Selmanovitz maintained an independent streak that set him apart. There was one rabbinic task, common for his peers in the *Agudas HaRabbonim* and like organizations, that he refused to undertake. He did not give *hashgahot* (rabbinic certifications) on any food product, declaring that he would not approve as kosher anything "that his eyes do not see and his hands do not make." In another departure from his crowd, Selmanovitz refused to join Agudas Israel, perhaps because its anti-Zionism was at sharp odds with his favorable view of the secularist *halutsim's* vital contribution to the development of Eretz Israel. His firm support of Rabbis Moshe and Joseph Baer Soloveitchik, who legitimized Revel's centrist Orthodox philosophy despite right-wing religious opposition, never wavered. Perhaps most remarkably, when his daughter Bertha (Brakha) asked her father for permission after graduating Hunter College to attend the Jewish Theological Seminary, explaining that that bastion of Conservatism could give her the best education in Hebrew for a teaching career, he consented.⁴²

Still, Selmanovitz's world remained that of staunch Orthodoxy. Faced with the unrelenting challenges of the New World to the rules and cohesion which marked Jewish life in the Old, he resolved not to follow his father's example entirely. He would keep the European name intact. (In RIETS circles, it would always be pronounced "Zalmanovitz.") The same held true for his *kapoteh*, his *yarmulka*, and the unmistakable Galician-Yiddish accent that permeated his speech.

This overall position governed family relations as well. Discovering that most of his siblings did not remain strictly Orthodox once in America, Selmanovitz chose to have very little involvement with them. The exception was Yutta Rachel (Ray), his older sister, who stayed within the Orthodox fold. The two were very close; she and her husband Elya (Alex) Cohen, prosperous residents of Washington Heights, helped Abraham financially when times were difficult. In related fashion, on a first visit to the apartment of son Louis's future in-laws, he was appalled by the bearskin rug that lay on the floor. Little wonder that Abraham kicked the rug aside, saying that it was inappropriate for a Jewish home; housewife Sarah Simon, herself very religious and in awe of this imposing figure, promptly threw the offending item down the incinerator chute.

His strict adherence to custom also explains why the oldest Selmanovitz child, Esther, married later in life. When her father discovered that the Hebrew name of her suitor Albert was identical with his own, he refused to allow the engagement to proceed. (This is based on the tradition that one should not have a spouse with the same name as a parent, so that no disrespectful mix-up can ensue.) Heartbroken, the obedient daughter delayed marriage to another man for some years. In another instance, the rabbi refused to officiate at or even attend a nephew's wedding because it took place in a non-Orthodox synagogue; estrangement within the clan inevitably followed.⁴³

Selmanovitz's personal example exerted considerable influence on some of his children, but not on others. All kept to the name "Selmanovitz" or "Selmanowitz." Yet, his attempt to find suitable husbands for his daughters by inviting the more able Yeshiva students to 214 Rodney St. for a Shabbat on one occasion failed; the effort would not be repeated.⁴⁴ With America offering freedom from want and freedom of motion, his daughters and sons contended with seemingly endless possibilities that had never existed for Jews in Europe. Together with second-generation Americans of the twentieth century – Jew and Gentile, theirs was a world awaiting reinvention.

Selmanovitz's universe of sacred text and custom was, therefore, on a definite collision course with secularism and change. Choices had to be made.

Esther became a very successful interior designer. She ultimately married Joseph Dubow, a *shobet* and Torah scholar, much in Selmanovitz's mold. Dubow offered financial help to the widow and two teen-aged children of Esther's brother Leib (Louis) when the latter died at a young age. Esther and Joe, who had no children, visited Israel frequently, and bought an apartment in Jerusalem in the 1950s. After Joe's death, Esther married Abe Shulman, whom she met in that city's Central Hotel. They spent time both in her home in Riverdale, New York, and in her Jerusalem apartment before they retired to Israel's capital. In Riverdale, she maintained close ties with Rabbi Irving Greenberg, later head of CLAL, who was the executor of her estate.

Subsequently, Esther bought another, more modern apartment in a large Jerusalem building at 22 Pinsker Street, known for the large number of Americans living there. She became very active in charity work, especially on behalf of the Sha'arei Zedek Hospital and institutions that cared for orphans. A special fund was set up to underwrite their weddings, where she was a frequent guest. Esther was a good friend of *Rabbanit* Sarah Herzog, widow of the first Ashkenazi chief rabbi of the State of Israel, Rabbi Isaac (Yitzhak HaLevi) Herzog. Esther eventually had a small volume of her father's short essays collected and published, and donated her father's religious books to the Gur yeshivah and to Yeshivat Merkaz HaRav Kook, both in Jerusalem. She also purchased antique Torah scrolls from Italy for use in the synagogue maintained in the building at 22 Pinsker St., dedicating one to the memory of her father and another to the memory of her brother Louis. In her will, Esther left her apartment and its furnishings, which contained a number of art works, to the Sha'arei Zedek Hospital.⁴⁵

Simha Bunim (Benjamin), called "Benny" once on these shores, married Esther Spiegel of Racaiz, Poland. Also from a family of Gur hasidim, Esther had arrived in America aboard the *SS Mount Clay* in October 1922, coming alone at the invitation of an older brother already living here. The pair met in 1925 via a *shiddukh* (in the tradition of Benny's parents) and married one year later. Like his grandfather, with whom he lived when first coming to America, Benny became a *shobet*. He was active in the Jewish ritual slaughterer's union, going on strike and having his family march with him. Later on, his father laughingly told Benny that he had learned to go on strike from his son, since the *roshei haYeshiva* at RIETS later struck once when their salaries had not been paid for some time. Benny also received

semikha privately and would officiate at weddings. When this couple became naturalized in 1937, their occupations were given as “rabbi” and “housewife.” Esther was an excellent cook, and for a time she and Benny entered the catering business. Rabbi Selmanovitz was known to be very fond of her, and to have admired her culinary abilities greatly. He also felt very close to Benny and Esther, since they, of all Abraham’s children, most followed the Gerer Hasidic tradition.

Their oldest child, Victor, spent much time in Williamsburg with his grandparents Abraham and Chana. He was an exceptionally bright student, whose college career was cut short because of a mastoid infection, which affected his sight and left him with other health problems. Benny and Esther had two other children, both daughters. Judith died at the age of 33, leaving two young children, a son and a daughter, who were raised by their father, Ted Rosenzweig. The other, Rivka (Rose), married Julius Liebb; they had three daughters and one son.⁴⁶

Benny and Esther’s bungalow colony in the Catskill Mountains reflected yet another key piece in the mosaic that made up the immigrant Jewish experience in America. Eastern European Jews who, at the turn of the century, tried to do mixed farming in that inhospitable soil had found, like their non-Jewish neighbors, that they had to take in boarders to make ends meet. Initially, friends and kin arrived to escape the heat and toil associated with New York City one hundred miles away; they reveled in the fresh air, the sun, and the uplifting power of nature. Rising demand, reinforced by refusal of admission to “Hebrews” by Gentile-owned resorts in the area and the Adirondacks, created in turn hundreds of Jewish bungalow colonies and boarding houses in New York State’s Ulster and Sullivan counties. Before long, hotels and their Jewish entertainers year-round converted the Catskills in the public mind from simply “the mountains” to “the borscht belt.” For Louis Selmanowitz’s daughter, whose father sometimes inspected kosher hotels in the vicinity, being hosted in the “Jewish Alps” and getting passes to weekend shows at resorts like Grossinger’s remains a fond memory of youth.⁴⁷

For Morris, the name soon replacing “Moszak” (Moshe), America beckoned in more radical measure. At first, along with many of his immigrant contemporaries, this Selmanovitz son worked in the garment industry. He also served as a *kashrut* supervisor in different catering halls. When living at home, Morris retained the facade of Sabbath observance. When he married and left Williamsburg for the Bronx, however, Morris became openly non-

observant. His wife, who worked in a sweatshop, met the young man via a “Brighton Beach-Rockaway Romance” common to the second generation: walking on the boardwalk in Rockaway. They had two sons and a daughter; she died tragically as a teenager. One son went on to become a professor of mathematics in California, while the other lives in Florida; Tillie, Morris’s widow, resided there as well.⁴⁸

Louis (Aryeh Leib), the next child born to Abraham and Chana, is remembered by all with great fondness. Portrayed as a tall, handsome man, meticulously dressed, very bright, and gentle, he seems to have been everyone’s favorite. Louis graduated *Beit Midrash LeMorim* of Yeshiva University (Yeshiva’s status upgraded by the New York State Department of Education in 1945) with a teacher’s certificate. Never putting the degree to professional use, he also attended Columbia College at night, pursuing premedical studies. Needing to earn money, Louis tried his hand at various schemes. A cousin, Joseph Fox (formerly Fuks), had made arrangements to produce a Yiddish film starring the world-renowned cantor Yossele Rosenblatt. (During the filming, Rosenblatt died; his funeral was recorded in this musical travel log of Palestine.) Using the name Louis Solomon, Louis traveled to Canada and some U.S. cities to promote the film, “The Dream of My People,” which had been finished in Palestine in 1934.

He also worked part-time as a *kashrut* inspector, which is how Louis met his wife. Ethel (Esther Rivka) Simon, who then lived on Rogers Avenue in Flatbush, was in her uncle’s butcher shop one day when Louis entered for an inspection. He spoke with the young woman and a courtship followed. Enrolled in New York University, Ethel was studying to be a teacher. They married on March 14, 1937 in Grand Street’s Grand Paradise Hall, with Rabbi Revel in attendance. At this point, Louis dropped out of college to support a family and went to work full-time for the *kashrut* division of the state’s Department of Agriculture. Their oldest child, Victor, was born in 1938, and the second, Livia, in 1943.⁴⁹

Louis was a modest, sentimental, and loving person. When away from home on work trips, he would write Ethel letters, bringing flowers and gifts for the children when he returned. His sister Bertha remembers him buying her a special gift, a fur coat, when she made the Dean’s List at Hunter College. He always tried new things, and brought home one of the earliest television sets available on the market. During World War II, Louis served in the National Guard in upstate New York. All personal hope to be a physician ended forever, these aspirations being transferred to his son Victor.

Louis had a deep sense of respect for his parents, whom he loved dearly. He followed their example in maintaining an Orthodox Jewish home, although of a modern cast, and helped found the Young Israel of Vanderveer Park. When his son Victor, a very mischievous child in the throes of third-generation rebellion, had to be admonished, Louis would invariably respond with a question: "What would *zaidee* (grandfather) say?" Louis visited his parents on a weekly basis, and would hurry to 214 Rodney St. when they had any need. After his father died, Louis was the first child his mother would telephone for help. He spent a great deal of time with her until his own illness.

In 1954, Louis was appointed head of the *kashrut* division of the New York State Department of Agriculture. A break in the dark clouds of financial stress, which long hovered above him, seemed finally at hand. Despite these tensions, Louis had always committed whatever his means allowed to a yeshivah education for his son and daughter. Yet now, with respite in view, he began feeling ill. Louis resigned from his position, too weak to work. Mother Chana would make special foods for him to eat in the hopes of whetting his appetite and thus strengthening her son. The illness was at last diagnosed as Hodgkin's disease. Louis died in 1957 at the age of 47.⁵⁰

Selmanovitz's next son, Jack (Ya'akov), became a diamond cutter. He learned this profession with his older brother Benny, although the latter never worked in that trade. During World War II, many members of the Orthodox community entered the diamond business, since commerce with European centers such as Antwerp was severed. Jack enjoyed the reputation of having great strength, able to tear telephone books in half. This physical prowess was inherited from his mother's family, who counted among their numbers an Olympic wrestler. Jack married and had one child, Barry. Unfortunately, the boy had mastoids as a child and later developed rheumatic heart disease. Taught a great deal at home, he later proved to be an outstanding success in school. After completing training for psychiatry, Barry committed suicide. Jack eventually separated from his wife, after which he went to live with his widowed mother. In time, he returned to the Orthodox Jewish practices of his youth.⁵¹

Miriam, ten months younger than Jack, married Irving Rosenfeld. Abraham and Chana's second daughter, bright and attractive, had graduated with a B.A. degree from Brooklyn College. She met Rosenfeld while he was serving in the U.S. Air Force during World War II. The two eloped, a match

outside the Orthodox fold. With her husband a dentist, Miriam acted as the office receptionist. Unfortunately, medical problems prevented Miriam from having children.⁵²

Bertha (Brakha), the next Selmanovitz child, graduated from Hunter College and took a Hebrew teacher's degree from the Jewish Theological Seminary. She married Julius Machlis, a cantor and salesman in the fabric trade. He had also been a Hebrew teacher and principal of a Hebrew school. They had two sons, Joel and David (Peter). Once widowed, Bertha moved to Lawrence, New York. Active in various Jewish organizations, she was honored many times by her local synagogue and other charitable groups. Her interest in studying Torah did not diminished, and she remained active in the Orthodox Jewish community.⁵³

The youngest of the brood enjoyed a special relationship with her father. From spending all of a weekly five-dollar allowance on candy for the parent she adored, to combing his hair and beard as he lay down on the sofa, Vita (Ita) did all to please him. He, in turn, regularly sat the little girl on his lap, and supported her subsequent use of makeup when a zealous young relative raised objection. In Vita's eyes, her father remained "the sweetest, softest person in the world."

One *Rosh HaShana* night, Vita, then still a teenager, met her future husband, Nathan Friedman. After two years at Hunter College, she married the accountant-postal worker. Nathan respected his father-in-law immensely, years later recalling the sage's gifts of charity worldwide and the "brilliant masterpieces" which the rabbi delivered in *shul* on Shabbat and religious holidays. The couple moved to Brighton Beach, where Vita worked tirelessly to build the local synagogue center. While Nathan also volunteered his services for the next thirty-five years to the Knights of Pythias, his wife offered her talents to a Jewish home for incurables. The loving pair had three children, Joan, Barry and Shelly. Vita and Nathan eventually moved to Las Vega, living a more liberal religious lifestyle while "trying to be as kosher as we can be in a non-kosher town."⁵⁴

All eight Selmanovitz children had married by 1946, when Abraham, long a heavy smoker, lay ill with cancer. Yet even then, his sense of humor surfaced. During a visit to the hospital, a former student queried how his *rebbe* would deal with female nurses. Responded the patient: If they were very good, caring, and attractive, and in fact appeared to him as *malakhim mi'ma'al* (angels from heaven), who was he to question the One above?⁵⁵

A frequent visitor to the stricken victim was Rabbi Joseph Baer

Soloveitchik, who told his students to inform him of any change in Selmanovitz's condition. Since assuming Rabbi Moshe's position as *rosh haYeshiva*, Soloveitchik continued the warm, close relationship with Selmanovitz that his father had treasured. It was through Joseph Baer's personal invitation that Selmanovitz came to Boston to eulogize Rabbi Moshe in an *azkarat sheloshim* (a memorial service held one month after the Jewish individual's death). The older man, in turn, showed his deep respect for the new senior *rosh yeshiva* by having him come to Williamsburg every year and give a public *shiur* (Torah lecture) at the Poilisher Shteibel. Students from all the local yeshivas came to hear this annual discourse, where standing room only prevailed. For Soloveitchik, Selmanovitz's most admirable characteristic was his rapport with, and respect for, the students of RIETS, and he remained forever grateful to the individual who resolutely championed the Soloveitchik dynasty there.⁵⁶

On October 4, 1946, at 9:25 in the morning of Yom Kippur eve, Rabbi Abraham Isaac Selmanovitz passed away after a long illness. The funeral was held that same Friday, just several hours preceding the holiest 25-hour-period in the Jewish year. The pressure of time notwithstanding, hundreds of people attended the services, including members of the community and of the two *shuls* Selmanovitz served as rabbi, as well as students of RIETS and other *yeshivot*. Administrators from Yeshiva University, headed by President Belkin and Dean Samuel Sar, came, as did representatives of Yeshiva Torah VoDa'ath and the Agudas HaRabbonim. The leaders of the Novominsker, Modzitsker, and Daliner hasidic dynasties also arrived to pay their last respects. Williamsburg's streets were "black with people," recalled one onlooker of the moving farewell, distinguished by a bearded mass attired in the same color hats and gabardines. The cortege ended in Beth David Cemetery, located in Elmont, Long Island, with burial taking place in the section reserved for the hasidim of Gur.⁵⁷

Rabbi Joseph Baer Soloveitchik, present when Selmanovitz breathed his last, was the major eulogist that day. He had specially flown in from Boston and returned shortly before Yom Kippur began. The city's chief rabbi was given a police escort, sirens blaring, from Boston's airport in order to be able to arrive in *shul* for *Kol Nidrei*, marking the commencement of evening prayers; so pressed was Soloveitchik for time that he was unable to partake of the customary pre-fast meal.⁵⁸

Orthodox Jewry in America took note of this loss in its ranks. The *Morgen Zhurnal* (Morning Journal) spoke about the sixty-nine-year-old

deceased as a *gaon* (luminary) of Torah, both in the realm of *beki'ut* (expertise in the sources) and in that of *harifut* (incisiveness of mind). Eloquent notices appeared in the *Morgen Zburnal*, the principal Yiddish-language newspaper for the Orthodox, from the *Agudas HaRabbonim* and the Talmud Torah Anshei Emes, as well as from the executive of the Va'ad HaRabbanim of Williamsburg.⁵⁹

One month later, a memorial service was held in the Harry Fischel Synagogue of Yeshiva College. Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik spoke about his father's relationship with Selmanovitz, their two identities "merged into one." He vividly portrayed for the more than three hundred people in attendance a picture of the way they knew the deceased best: "smiling, erect, and with the dignified bearing of a great scholar and educator." Personally, confessed the speaker, the departure of Rabbi Selmanovitz left him with "his arms outstretched in vain" and with the feeling of an irreplaceable loss. Rabbi Aaron Burack, a RIETS colleague of Selmanovitz, eulogized his good friend as a great teacher devoted to his pupils, and noted that he gave a large portion of his small income to charity and was to a large degree responsible for the Gerer *Rebbe's* escape to Palestine.⁶⁰

Rabbi Dr. Sidney Hoenig, often a houseguest at 214 Rodney St., also spoke. Leader of the Young Israel of Williamsburg, Hoenig had learned much from Selmanovitz, taking note of his practice as a communal rabbi. Before the Passover holiday, in particular, Hoenig would spend hours watching Selmanovitz write out the *shtar mekhirat hametz*, the pre-Passover contract with a Gentile for selling him Jewish-owned leavened foods that are forbidden to Jews during the holiday. Hoenig, who also taught Jewish history at Yeshiva College, would accompany the older man on the train every day to RIETS. To the assembled at the memorial service, Hoenig pointed out that Selmanovitz gave unselfishly to others; he found time for his personal study either during the late evening or the early hours of the morning.⁶¹

The deceased was also able to leave an estate of some worth. The record on file gave a sum of \$23,586 in cash, deposited in various banks. (There were no stocks and bonds or a life insurance policy.) The actual and assessed value of 214 Rodney St. came to \$5,500. A mortgage on that property in the sum of \$4,600 left an equity of about \$900. Debts for medical expenses ran to \$2,700; other expenses such as the funeral and incidentals amounted to about \$500. One-third of the estate would go to his wife, their eight children to share the remainder in equal measure.⁶²

"My *sefer Torah* is gone!" So Chana Selmanovitz cried out when her beloved mate of fifty-two years was no more. In Chana's perception, the holiest emblem of Judaism and the image of her husband who lived by its precepts were always one and the same. A few years later, in light of the projected Brooklyn-Queens Expressway, the house in Williamsburg (like the Poilisher Shteibel) was sold to the city. Chana went to live near her daughters Miriam and Vita in the Brighton Beach section of Brooklyn. She died in 1974, at the ripe age of ninety-four, and was buried in the women's section of the same Gur cemetery grounds where her Abraham lay at rest.⁶³ Thus drew to a close the story of one Jewish family's first generation in twentieth-century America.

Rabbi Abraham Isaac Selmanovitz exercised great impact on those who made up his self-contained universe. In such Orthodox fastnesses as Opoczno, Williamsburg, and RIETS, his *yibush* (lineage) rested on his being a traditional scholar of impeccable character. A commanding voice matched the tall frame, exuding authority and even charisma for hundreds who shared his certitudes. In Rabbi Joseph Baer Soloveitchik's eloquent characterization, Selmanovitz's "great spiritual value" lay in his being "a humble man who concealed his virtue." This sage's desire for knowledge "sublimated the desire for material wealth" that attracted so many of his generation. Looking at Selmanovitz's stately figure, Soloveitchik aptly saw "not the skyscrapers and concrete of the huge metropolis, but the Torah communities of Warsaw and Lodz."⁶⁴

Yet, the unfettered reality that was America, given the acceptance and affluence so foreign to the Jewish experience in Eastern Europe, suggested countless alternatives for future exploration. The variegated richness of the new and the untried attracted some younger, adventurous spirits within the Selmanovitz family. Along with the large majority of their Jewish contemporaries in the United States, they would jettison the life of enclosed *halakha* and prudence for personal achievement and happiness. The insular lifestyle of precincts like Williamsburg was to be abandoned for seemingly endless vistas that appeared on the horizon.

Selmanovitz lamented the consequences. In one *derasha* (homily) at the Poilisher Shteibel, he reminded his listeners of the liturgical phrase in Hebrew "*ashamnu mi'kol am*" (we have become more guilty than any nation). "Surely this confession to God appeared to be without grounds!" he wondered. Yet, the rabbi went on in his trademark Yiddish, the assertion possessed a sad validity: Unlike other nations that had progressed over time from a culture

of thievery to one of educational attainment, Jews were renouncing the incomparable Torah and Talmud of their ancestors for the seductive forces of materialism and pleasure. Their prayers, their homes, their lives – all were a greatly weakened version of the proud traditions of yore.⁶⁵

One of the last scions of Polish Jewry, Selmanovitz could not stem the tide. Aided by his loyal Chana for more than a half-century, this guardian of Orthodox tradition chose a path of upright, rigorous commitment. Few did so, with palpable results. Modernity, as he foresaw, would bring spectacular success to Jews, but concomitantly give rise to a diminished Judaism. Some of his own children reflected the same trend. The Jewish people's survival on these welcome shores now rested with the next generation.

Notes

Reprinted in slightly revised form with permission from *Turim* 1 (New York, 2007), pp. 143-184.

- 1 Microfilm T-715, #6664, reel no. 2901, p. 23, National Archives and Records Administration, North East Region (hereafter NARA-NE), New York City.
- 2 Victor Selmanowitz interview with Idelle Rudman, Sept. 10, 1996.
- 3 Victor Selmanowitz interview; Esther (nee Selmanowitz) to Victor (Selmanowitz), Oct. 16, 1977, Victor Selmanowitz MSS., Touro College; *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 7:784-86, 12:1415. Family tradition also has the name of Selmanowitz dating to Schneur Zalman of Lyady in Russia, founder of Chabad (Lubavitch) Hassidism. Livia Straus interview with author, July 8, 1998.
- 4 Victor Selmanowitz interview; *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 13:1500, 13:648, 4:981. When declaring his intention to become an American citizen (see below), the rabbi listed Plotz, Russia, as his last foreign residence, with Warsaw his birthplace.
- 5 Celia S. Heller, *On the Edge of Destruction: Jews of Poland between the Two World Wars* (New York, 1977), chaps. 2-3; Yisrael Gutman, "Polish Antisemitism between the Wars: An Overview," in Y. Gutman, E. Mendelsohn, J. Reinhartz, and C. Shmeruk, eds., *The Jews of Poland between Two World Wars* (Hanover, 1989), pp. 97-108; George Castellán, "Remarks on the Social Structure of the Jewish Community in Poland between the Two World Wars," in B. Vago and G. Mosse,

- eds., *Jews and Non-Jews in Eastern Europe, 1918-1945* (New York, 1974), pp. 187-201; Livia Straus interview; Victor Selmanowitz interview; Microfilm T-625, reel no. 1064, vol. 99, sheet 2, line 88, NARA-NE.
- 6 *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 15:1608; Gerald Sorin, *A Time for Building: The Third Migration, 1880-1920* (Baltimore, 1992), p. 12; *Naturalization Service, Record of Declaration of Intention, Mar. 16-Apr. 1, 1921*, vol. 499, p. 320 (Surrogate's Court, Hall of Records, 31 Chambers St., New York City).
 - 7 Microfilm T-715, #6913, reel no. 3034, p. 41, NARA-NE.
 - 8 Microfilm T-715, #6916, reel no. 3035, p. 36, NARA-NE; Microfilm T-715, #6942, reel no. 3046, p. 58, NARA-NE.
 - 9 Jeffrey S. Gurock, *When Harlem Was Jewish, 1870-1930* (New York, 1979); Bertha S. Machlis interview with Idelle Rudman, July 16, 1996; Microfilm KC-2083, Liber 4666, pp. 500-501, conveyances – Kings County, City Register, Dept. of Finance, New York City. For the lower East Side, see Moses Rischin, *The Promised City: New York's Jews, 1870-1914* (New York, 1962); Irving Howe, *World of Our Fathers* (New York, 1976).
 - 10 *Naturalization Service, Petition and Record*, vol. 245, petition #67376, NARA-NE.
 - 11 George Kranzler, *Williamsburg: A Jewish Community in Transition* (New York, 1961), pp. 16-19. For the changes wrought by the entry of the extremist Hungarian Jews to the area, beginning in the mid-1930s, see *ibid.*, p. 250.
 - 12 Victor Selmanowitz interview; *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 7:786, 15:518, 1611.
 - 13 Victor Selmanowitz interview.
 - 14 Louis (Lipa) Brenner, "The Poilisher Shteibel: Reflections on Life in Williamsburg in the '30's and '40's," *Jewish Observer*, Nov. 22-28, 1992; Bernard Belsky, telephone conversation with the author, Feb. 17, 1998.
 - 15 Bertha Machlis, interview.
 - 16 Bertha Machlis interview; Aaron Rothkoff, *Bernard Revel: Builder of American Jewish Orthodoxy* (Philadelphia, 1972), pp. 14-16.
 - 17 Bertha Machlis interview.
 - 18 Victor Selmanowitz interview.
 - 19 Harold P. Gastwirt, *Fraud, Corruption and Holiness: The Controversy Over the Supervision of the Jewish Dietary Practice in New York City, 1881- 1940* (Port Washington, N.Y., 1974); Ruchama Shein, *All for the Boss* (New York, 1984); Victor Selmanowitz interview; Vita and Nathan Friedman telephone conversation with the author, Nov. 17, 1998.
 - 20 Victor Selmanowitz interview; *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 15:127-131; Shulamith Meiselman (sister of Joseph B. Soloveitchik), interview with Idelle Rudman, Feb. 15, 1996; Philip Reiss interview with Idelle Rudman, Sept. 1, 1996.
 - 21 Rothkoff, *Bernard Revel*, chaps. 2-3; Israel Schorr interview with Idelle Rudman, Aug. 5, 1996.
 - 22 Melech Schechter interview with Idelle Rudman, July 23, 1996; Maurice Wohlgelernter interview with Idelle Rudman, Feb. 13, 1996; Israel Schorr interview; Vita and Nathan Friedman telephone conversation.
 - 23 Melech Schechter interview; Julius Hyatt interview with Idelle Rudman, July 26,

- 1996; Murray Grauer interview with Idelle Rudman, Nov. 24, 1996.
- 24 Israel Miller interview with Idelle Rudman, Sept. 18, 1996.
- 25 Rothkoff, *Bernard Revel*, p. 126; Bernard Belsky interview with Idelle Rudman, Feb. 17, 1996.
- 26 Rothkoff, *Bernard Revel*, p. 126; Victor Selmanowitz interview.
- 27 Selmanovitz to Revel, Apr. 4, 1935, folder 5/1-6, General Correspondence "S", 1928-1935, Bernard Revel MSS., Yeshiva University Archives, New York City; Bernard Lander interview with the author, Mar. 9, 1998; Rothkoff, *Bernard Revel*, chap. 7. For more on the Agudas HaRabbonim's particular stance, see Louis Bernstein, "Generational Conflict in American Orthodoxy: The Early Years of the Rabbinical Council of America," *American Jewish History* 59 (Dec. 1979): 230-234.
- 28 Shulamith Meiselman interview; Aaron Soloveitchik interview with Idelle Rudman, Feb. 19, 1996; Shulamith Soloveitchik Meiselman, *The Soloveitchik Heritage* (Hoboken, N.J., 1995), p. 248.
- 29 Jeffrey S. Gurock, *The Men and Women of Yeshiva: Higher Education, Orthodoxy, and American Judaism* (New York, 1988), pp. 128-32; Bernstein, "Generational Conflict," 228; Shulamith Meiselman interview; Philip Reiss interview; Maurice Wohlgerlenter interview.
- 30 Maurice Wohlgerlenter interview; Philip Reiss interview; Haym Soloveitchik interview with Idelle Rudman, Mar. 17, 1996; Gurock, *The Men and Women of Yeshiva*, p. 132; *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 15:132-133.
- 31 Uri Kaploun, *Rebbes of Ger* (New York, 1987), p. 263; Moshe Yehezkieli, *Nes HaHatsala Shel HaRebbi MiGur* (Jerusalem, 1959), p. 17; Ruth Lichtenstein telephone interview with the author, May 7, 1999; Victor Selmanowitz interview.
- 32 Yehezkieli, *Nes HaHatsala*, p. 26; Selmanovitz to Mazaloff (?), Jan. 30, 1940, Selmanowitz MSS.
- 33 Yehezkieli, *Nes HaHatsala*, p. 26; Eugene Goodman (grandchild of the Bienenfelds) interview with Idelle Rudman, Oct. 24, 1996; David Silver (son of Eliezer Silver) telephone interview with Idelle Rudman, Apr. 23, 1996; Aaron Rakeffet-Rothkoff, *The Silver Era* (New York, 1981), p. 194. For Va'ad HaHatzala activities during World War II, see Monty Noam Penkower, *The Jews Were Expendable: Free World Diplomacy and the Holocaust* (Urbana, IL, 1983), chap. 9.
- 34 Yehezkieli, *Nes HaHatsala*, pp. 25, 29; Chaim Shoskes, "Ersht itst kehn mehn dertseilin di geshikhte vegen vunderbarer raytung fun velt-baremt Gerer Rebbe," *Der Morgen Zhurnal*, Feb. 22, 1948, p. 9.
- 35 Alter to Selmanovitz (date unclear), Selmanowitz MSS.; Yehezkieli, *Nes HaHatsala*, *passim*.
- 36 Victor Selmanowitz interview; Livia Straus to author, July 9, 1998; receipts of Selmanovitz packages to Nissen, Cirel, and Szmul Fuks, Mar. 14, 1941, Selmanowitz MSS.
- 37 Bertha Machlis interview with author; Vita and Nathan Friedman interview.
- 38 Penkower, *The Jews Were Expendable*, p. 136; Victor Selmanowitz interview. A visit in 1999 to Poland by Stephen Straus, brother-in-law of Livia Straus, uncovered the last Jew of Ger, Felix Karpmann. A survivor of the Holocaust and waves of

local postwar pogroms, Karpmann showed the Americans what remained of the quadrangle that housed the former Gerer residence, *shul*, and rabbinic court: “Decaying buildings form an ‘L’ around a muddy courtyard. A few Poles came out in curiosity to see the new group of Jewish tourists and to have their palms greased with a few zlotys for allowing us into the building that once housed the *Rebbe’s shul*. It is a large barn-like structure with poor fluorescent lighting and a 60-foot stretch of cheap pine tables and benches. The kids hauled in several boxes of provisions and made sandwiches for the road. I couldn’t connect spiritually with the place at all. For me there were no echoes of brilliant *drashas* and joyous prayers in this building, but it came to life briefly when we sang for Felix.” Straus diary, copy given to the author by Livia Straus, June 5, 1999. Today, there are an estimated 25,000 Gerer hasidim in Israel, with another 1,000 families in Brooklyn’s Boro Park. The current Gerer *Rebbe* is Yaakov Aryeh Alter, son of Simha Bunim Alter (d. 1992), one of the sons of the *Imrei Emes* (d. 1948). Ruth Lichtenstein, telephone conversation with the author, May 7, 1999.

- 39 Victor Selmanowitz interview; Livia Straus to the author, July 9, 1998; Livia Straus conversation with the author, Nov. 26, 1997; Livia Straus memoir, given to the author, June 5, 1999.
- 40 Bertha Machlis, interview with author.
- 41 Jerry Selman to Yaelle Ehrenpreis, Apr. 7, 1999.
- 42 Bertha Machlis interview with Idelle Rudman; Victor Selmanowitz interview. For Agudas Israel’s stance on Zionism in the years before 1939, see chap. 7.
- 43 Victor Selmanowitz interview; Livia Straus to author, July 8, 1998; Victor Pollock interview with the author, Nov. 18, 1998.
- 44 Victor Selmanowitz interview.
- 45 Victor Selmanowitz interview; Abraham Selmanovitz, *Zekher Avraham Yitzhak*, compiled, Aaron Rakeffet-Rothkoff (Jerusalem, 1976). For a sense of the rabbi’s Torah scholarship, see Avraham Yitshak Selmanovitz, “Hasagot Al Sefer Emek Halakhah,” in *Sefer Yevul HaYovlot*, N. Alpert, A. Cohen, and Z. Shachter, eds. (New York, 1986), pp. 102-110.
- 46 Naturalization Service, Petition and Record files, petitions #231999 and #232000, NARA-NE; Victor Selmanowitz interview. While Abraham Selmanovitz, upon becoming a citizen in 1927, had given Benny’s birthdate as Nov. 15, 1902, Benny now wrote down Feb. 12, 1904. (The latter is obviously in error, since younger brother Moshe was born that year.)
- 47 Sorin, *A Time for Building*, pp. 157-158; Livia Straus conversation with the author, Nov. 26, 1997.
- 48 Victor Selmanowitz interview.
- 49 Victor Selmanowitz interview; *Courier*, Dec. 18, 1934; Victor Selmanowitz MSS.; Selmanovitz-Simon wedding invitation, Mar. 14, 1937, Revel Collection, folder 5/1-7, General Correspondence “S”, 1930-1940, Yeshiva University Archives.
- 50 Livia Straus conversation with the author, Nov. 26, 1997; Bertha Machlis interview with Idelle Rudman.
- 51 Victor Selmanowitz interview.

- 52 Livia Straus conversation with the author, Nov. 26, 1997.
- 53 Bertha Machlis interview with Idelle Rudman.
- 54 Vita and Nathan Friedman telephone interview.
- 55 Livia Straus to the author, July 8, 1998.
- 56 Philip Reiss interview; Maurice Wohlgelernter interview.
- 57 Microfilm no. 651, Death Certificate #19157, New York City Dept. of Records and Information Services, Municipal Archives, New York City; *Morgen Zhurnal*, Oct. 6, 1946; Louis Brenner telephone conversation with the author, Feb. 17, 1998.
- 58 Shulamith Meiselman interview.
- 59 *Morgen Zhurnal*, Oct. 6, 1946.
- 60 *Commentator*, Dec, 5, 1946, p. 1.
- 61 *Ibid.*: Ya'akov Hoenig (son of Sidney), interview with Idelle Rudman, Sept. 17, 1996.
- 62 File 9582-46, Kings County Surrogate's Court archives, Record Room 109, New York State Supreme Court, Brooklyn, New York.
- 63 Victor Selmanowitz interview. The location of the former house in Williamsburg currently lies where the Brooklyn Queens Expressway bisects Rodney Street.
- 64 Moshe Wolfson telephone interview with the author, Feb. 17, 1998; *Commentator*, Dec. 5, 1946.
- 65 Beryl Schwartz telephone conversation with the author, Feb. 17, 1998.

The "Jewish Seat" of Justice Felix Frankfurter

ON JANUARY 4, 1939, FELIX FRANKFURTER RECEIVED A TELEPHONE CALL from the White House to his Cambridge home at 192 Brattle Street. The Harvard Law School professor, late as usual for a dinner engagement and still in his underwear, picked up the receiver. "I told you that I can't appoint you to the Supreme Court," Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR) began, "but wherever I turn, wherever I turn, and to whomever I talk that matters to me, I am made to realize that you're the only person fit to succeed Holmes and Cardozo." "Unless you give me an unsurmountable objection," he went on, "I'm going to send your name in for the Court tomorrow at twelve o'clock." The garrulous scholar, suddenly "tongue-tied" although well aware of the machinations over the last half year on his behalf, mumbled only "All I can say is that I wish my mother were alive." He promised not to mention their talk until FDR announced his choice the next day. After dinner, Frankfurter penned a letter assuring "Frank" that "I am humbly aware of the consecrated task that you have laid upon me. And to have it at your hands – with all that you signify for my most precious devotion to the country – is to sanctify Law with its humanist significance." He closed: "With the affectionate devotion of old friendship, Ever yours, F.F."¹

The drama leading up to that brief conversation had commenced with the death, on July 9, 1938, of Benjamin Nathan Cardozo. Formerly a member and then chief judge of the New York Court of Appeals before his appointment to the Supreme Court in 1932, Cardozo ably championed law as an organic growth rather than a body of fixed, abstract principles. During the next six years, Associate Justice Cardozo proved to be a worthy successor to "the scholar's seat" vacated at the height of the Great Depression by the legendary Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. Together with like-minded colleagues Harlan F. Stone and Louis D. Brandeis, the first Jew to join "the Brethren" on the Court, the American-born Cardozo called for a broader interpretation of federal powers in legislation which he deemed "critical or urgent" for "the well-being of the nation." Concluded Felix Frankfurter: Under the influence of Holmes, Cardozo was second only to Holmes in making of the judicial process "a blend of continuity and creativeness."²

A few days later, Interior Secretary Harold L. Ickes asked Tom Corcoran

who he thought would be appointed to the Cardozo vacancy. Corcoran, a Harvard Law School graduate who had clerked for Holmes and subsequently, as one of Frankfurter's prodigies, was encouraged by Roosevelt to draft and maneuver legislation through Capitol Hill, promptly replied: Governor Frank Murphy of Michigan or John P. Devaney, former chief judge of the Minnesota Supreme Court. If the first won re-election and the second were ruled out because the tenacious conservative Associate Justice Pierce Butler (another Catholic) came from Minnesota, the politically savvy young Irishman added, the chances appeared "good" for Frankfurter. Ickes wished for that outcome, convinced that his friend would continue in "the fine liberal tradition" of Holmes and Cardozo, and be an excellent influence on the Court "both spiritually and intellectually." Disappointed that Brandeis had not resigned to make way for Frankfurter, his primary disciple, Corcoran and Ickes had avoided the justice ever since Brandeis adamantly opposed Roosevelt's ill-fated effort the previous year to "pack" the Court with liberals sympathetic to reform legislation.³

The British left-wing political scientist Harold J. Laski, a long-time intimate of Holmes and of Frankfurter, had advised Brandeis to resign so that the Harvard academic could be appointed in his stead. "An entirely different type of man," he warned, would probably be appointed by a later administration. Brandeis answered his great admirer and fellow Jew in equivocal fashion: he was not certain that Frankfurter could not do more good by teaching the younger generation.⁴

Indeed, the fifty-six-year-old Frankfurter had already made a considerable mark on the American scene. Reaching New York's Lower East Side from Vienna with his parents in 1894, the short but ebullient youngster quickly mastered English; graduated from City College at nineteen; consistently led his Harvard Law School class; and briefly practiced law before working under Henry Stimson, U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York and then Secretary of War. He became one of the first contributing editors of the liberal *New Republic*, was a devoted friend of Holmes and Brandeis, and was appointed a professor at the Harvard Law School in 1914, entering a teaching career there that would span twenty-five years.

In many minds, Frankfurter became identified with radical political and social causes. Serving at President Woodrow Wilson's request in the Judge Advocate's department of the army during 1917-1920, Frankfurter strongly criticized the Bisbee deportations of more than 1,000 striking copper miners and the conviction of labor leaders Mooney and Billings for allegedly planting

a bomb in San Francisco which killed many people. After World War I, he became one of the original members of the American Civil Liberties Union, and assisted in the defense of aliens arrested and held for deportation, episodes that were the product of postwar hysteria. Frankfurter's activity on behalf of those whom he saw as victims of a miscarriage of justice reached its apex in the unsuccessful effort to have a new trial for Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, two Italian anarchists who were executed in 1927 on the charge of murder during a payroll robbery in South Braintree, Massachusetts. The embers of the bitter drama were stirred when Massachusetts Governor Joseph B. Ely nominated him in June, 1932, for a seat on the state's Supreme Judicial Court. Holmes and Laski thought the selection admirable, but, with Brandeis's approval, Frankfurter declined the unexpected offer. Frankfurter explained to Ely that although his rejection of the offer was "the most difficult decision of my professional life..., the long-term effects of legal education" were a greater priority for him than "immediate advancement on the bench."⁵

Roosevelt, traveling to Chicago to accept his party's presidential nomination and unaware of Frankfurter's refusal, telephoned congratulations along with an addendum: "I wish it were the Supreme Court of the United States – that's where you belong." The two men, born in the same year, had first worked together during World War I, when Frankfurter served as chairman of the interdepartmental War Labor Policies Board, of which Roosevelt, then an Assistant Secretary of the Navy, was also a member. He voted for the unsuccessful Democratic ticket of Cox and Roosevelt in 1920, but preferred the progressive Robert M. LaFollette in 1924 and Al Smith for the presidency four years later. When FDR became governor of New York in 1928, he had sought Frankfurter's counsel, particularly concerning the regulation of public utilities and water power development. "Frank" and "Felix" (or "F.F.") began a regular correspondence about such matters as credit inflation and city judges, but Frankfurter still preferred Smith over FDR for the Democrats' candidate in 1932. Once Roosevelt defeated Herbert Hoover, Frankfurter worked on a securities bill, brought Stimson and FDR together, and relayed messages from Brandeis and Stone to the newly elected chief executive. Just prior to the inaugural ceremonies, he wished a highly appreciative Roosevelt the blessings of Providence. "Never was gay and gallant command more needed," he wrote, and "never has it been entrusted into more auspicious hands."⁶

On March 8, 1933, as Frankfurter was lunching with Holmes, Roosevelt summoned him to the Oval Office and offered him the post of Solicitor

General. Although taken “completely off my feet,” Frankfurter countered that he could be of much more use to FDR by staying in Cambridge, aside from the fact that he was due to teach at Oxford University next fall. The president pressed on, “talking Dutch” as a friend. He ought to be on the Supreme Court and FDR wanted to put him there, but various objections remained: he was a professor; he had not actively practiced law or held judicial office; the Sacco-Vanzetti case; “your race.” Once he was Solicitor General, these issues would be forgotten or disappear. Frankfurter stood his ground, thinking it unwise to take a job that he did not want “simply because it may promote my going elsewhere.” After consulting with his wife, Holmes, and Brandeis, Frankfurter formally declined. “I have not yet forgiven you,” wrote FDR in early April. “How can I find anybody else with just your qualifications to appear on behalf of the government before the Supreme Tribunal? You are an independent pig and that is one reason why I cannot blame you!”⁷

“F.F.” quickly accepted “independent pig” as an accolade carrying the implications of “generosity and confidence,” but he could not so readily dismiss the words “your race,” which Roosevelt had uttered with “a grave countenance.” Considering himself “a reverent agnostic,” Frankfurter had married Marion Denman, the daughter of a Congregational minister, in a civil ceremony performed by Cardozo in the chambers of Federal Judge Learned Hand. Brandeis, who considered the younger scholar “half brother, half son,” converted him to the cause of Zionism, and the two played a significant role in bringing President Woodrow Wilson to endorse Great Britain’s support of a Jewish “national home” in Palestine with the Balfour Declaration of November, 1917.

Two years later, Frankfurter sought at the Paris Peace Conference to persuade European Zionists to adopt Brandeis’s program of social justice as the basis of a British Mandate for Palestine. On March, 1, 1919, he obtained a letter from Emir Feisal, head of the Arab delegation, stating that “we Arabs” looked with “the deepest sympathy” on the Zionist movement, whose proposals the Arab deputation regarded as “moderate and proper.” He and the rest of the delegation would do their best “to help [the Zionists] through,” wrote the Emir, and would “wish the Jews a most hearty welcome home.” Two months later, Frankfurter obtained a personal reassurance from Wilson of his “adhesion to the Balfour Declaration” and this assertion: “I see no ground for discouragement and every reason to hope that satisfactory guarantees can be secured.” When, however, Brandeis and prominent followers like U.S. Circuit Court Judge Julian W. Mack seceded from the movement over issues of organization and fiscal autonomy for American

Zionism, Frankfurter withdrew from formal participation in the cause.⁸

Unlike the American-born Brandeis and Mack, Frankfurter continued to wrestle with what his autobiographical reminiscences termed the legacy of his "father" and his "face." Although recalling that he was infused at an early date with the "very profoundly wise attitude" that the essence of being a Jew meant "that you should be a biped and walk on the two legs that man has," Frankfurter never could take the particularities of his Judaism for granted. Redirecting his deepest loyalties to the Harvard Law School, to the American rule of law, and to the adopted country of his childhood, he (like Mack, who became the first Jew on Harvard's Board of Overseers) opposed efforts to impose quotas on Jewish students at the college. Yet he remained aloof from Zionism, which he had championed earlier as an ingredient of American and British foreign policy, keeping silent during the murderous Arab riots of 1929 and consequent British restrictive legislation against Jewish entry into Palestine. An article which Frankfurter finally contributed to *Foreign Affairs* two years later, accusing London of deviating from the principles of the Balfour Declaration, was qualified by his dislike of nationalism and mitigated by admittedly "strong Anglophilism." He confined Zionist objectives to "a recognized legal position" in which Jews have the opportunity, without governing others, of creating "a well rounded civilized society" within their ancestral land.⁹

Frankfurter's first and only trip to Palestine, taken during a short break from teaching at Oxford, carried the force of revelation. To FDR, Holmes, and Stimson he rhapsodized about the country's "magical beauty" and the "incredible" Jewish renaissance taking place there. Jewish Palestine was "an established civilization," "most advantageous" to the interests of the British empire and through that to "the peace of the world," he reported to Brandeis and Mack. He found it to be so powerful an organism that "sizeable" future growth in Jewish population and power, continuing to bring "real advancement" to the Arab masses, would be "inevitable." Problems did exist: loose banking standards, land speculation, the great need for "completely disinterested social intercourse" between Jews and the British Mandate authorities, as well as the need for more Arab-Jewish collaborative ownership. The "fascist" tendencies of the Revisionist Zionists who opposed the "sound attitude" of the labor Histadrut organization, in his view a conflict between those who wanted merely a Jewish homeland and those who desired one with social justice, particularly had to be countered. Finally, the Western world had to receive simple exposition, devoid of polemic, of the "extraordinary achievements" of Palestine.¹⁰

Some in Brandeis's circle sharply disagreed with these conclusions. Jacob

de Haas, who had been the first to bring the Associate Justice to Zionism, observed that Frankfurter's findings "are based on what he prefers and approves in American life." The Histadrut, he averred, objected to Arab labor, fought the middle class that truly made Palestine's growth possible, and attacked its political opponents in the manner of Hitler and Mussolini. In addition, "wholly conflicting interests" set the Jew, facing the "brute truth" of being "impelled" to Palestine, against Great Britain's lack in practice of accommodating herself to the Balfour Declaration. Lawyer Abraham Tulin criticized the Histadrut's control of Palestine immigration certificates and its adoption of fascist-type tactics at the most recent Zionist Congress against the Revisionists, whose economic program actually sought the same furthering of private initiative wished by the Brandeis group. Another response, found in Mack's papers, emphasized that any interpretation by London of Jewish rights under the Balfour Declaration always tended to impose restrictions upon those rights, and that the Brandeisians should continue to remain neutral politically while developing economic enterprise in Palestine so as to make Zionism a reality. As much as any other group, concluded this writer, the Revisionists had prevented further "whittling down" of Jewish rights by the mandatory power and by the Zionist leadership under Chaim Weizmann.¹¹

When the Nazi dictatorship began to persecute the half-million Jews of Germany, Frankfurter spoke with FDR about an appropriate response from Washington. The Harvard professor sought to discover an "effective mode" whereby the U.S. government might manifest its "disapprobation of the breach of civilized standards by the Hitler regime," without impinging upon the Third Reich's freedom of action in domestic affairs. For over a century, Frankfurter wrote to Secretary of State Cordell Hull, the country had publicly, "in a quiet, non-truculent way," supported the right of political and religious asylum. To express the nation's readiness to facilitate admission of "refugees who are the victims of a brutal official policy" would merely assert this "unbroken and honorable tradition." Certain that Berlin's avowed objective was the "implacable and systematic economic and spiritual destruction – more brutal when not done through violence – of people of the Jewish race," Frankfurter asked Hull's forgiveness in closing on a personal, and highly revealing, note:

For once in my life I wish that for a brief period I were not a Jew.
Then I would not have even the appearance of being sectarian
in writing as I have written concerning interests that are not

narrower than those of "civilization," to use the characterization of the *Manchester Guardian*. And finally I ask your indulgence if I add that I am attached to the welfare of the Administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt more than I have been to that of any other President.

While in Oxford, he also forwarded information to FDR about the mounting violence of "Hitlerism" against Jews, together with its wider significance on world affairs.¹² Viewing the Nazi threat as fundamentally a global struggle between "reason and passion, between civilization and tribalism," Frankfurter thought that Jews "ought not to stultify the issue by reducing it to sectarian or racial dimensions." Yale University's accepting a bequest limited to students of "the Anglo-Saxon race, to which the United States owes its culture," he observed privately, explicitly inculcated public opinion against other groups which "have always been, and now are, important and equally to be respected part of the common national life." In the context of the times, nothing less was involved than how great academic centers stood in the conflict between "the fullest opportunities for the development of man's moral dignity, whatever his genealogical accidents, and confinement to the splendors of human variation within the humorless and brutal mold of pseudo-scientific self-glorification." From the same perspective, Frankfurter objected to the Harvard University Corporation's attending the 550th anniversary festivities at the University of Heidelberg, which had dismissed its Jewish professors, reshaped curricula to reflect Nazi ideology, and staged a public burning of books by Jews.¹³

"I quite agree with you that we cannot afford to rest easy in Zion" (*sic*), he replied when *Nation* editor Oscar G. Villard noted the steady rise of antisemitism in the United States. At the same time, Frankfurter added, a larger issue arose:

On the other hand, the longer I live the surer I am that 2 or 3 real men might have saved Sodom and Gemorrah. In other words, I reject completely the doctrine of the inevitability of history. If we will it, things can be made otherwise, and the willing of a few determined, disinterested, alert lovers of peace and freedom can make the decisive difference. They can arouse people from their lethargy and translate into dynamic significance the dominant ideals of a people.¹⁴

Upon returning to his law classes at Cambridge, Frankfurter continued to advise Roosevelt and to send his brightest students (dubbed by a critic Frankfurter's "Happy Hot Dogs") to Washington. In the summer of 1935 he spent several weeks at the White House, giving counsel on future proposals for reconstruction and reform, notably regarding securities regulation, labor legislation, and unemployment insurance. Political opponents increasingly considered him the *eminence grise* of the administration, one even judging Frankfurter "the most influential single individual in the United States." With the New Deal being labeled by many the "Jew Deal," and at a time when antisemitic manifestations like ritual murder tales and the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* were then receiving more credulity than at any other time in recent history, he cautioned his friend Archibald MacLeish that his article about the New Dealers "threw adjectives about Jews around with too ready a belief in the basis of racial generalizations." To a rabbi's plaint that many of the attacks against him were "beginning to assume an anti-Jewish tinge," Frankfurter replied in early 1936 that "my ideas and work...will have to speak for themselves."¹⁵

Some long-time acquaintances reproached him for the intensity of his personal loyalties to FDR and to the Supreme Court. Walter Lippmann, once an intimate friend from their work in the War Department and the *New Republic* but prepared to accept a 15 percent quota for Jewish undergraduates at Harvard in the ardent wish that his fellow Jews not become "conspicuous," obliquely criticized Frankfurter for his services to Roosevelt. In connection with Harvard College's tercentenary, the highly respected columnist announced in mid-1936 that "members of the university faculties" who involved themselves "in the ambitions and purposes of the politicians, the parties and the movements which are contending for power," have ceased to be disinterested scholars and "impair the independence of the university to which they belong." This innuendo Frankfurter never forgot nor forgave. Philosopher Morris R. Cohen, his former college roommate, chided him for maintaining faith that the Supreme Court could be hospitable to change. Frankfurter's preference for a constitutional amendment ultimately giving the federal government adequate power to cope with economic and industrial problems, advice he gave Roosevelt after the Court declared the 1933 National Industrial Recovery Act unconstitutional, Cohen found unconvincing: "you know that this is a long process and that it is silly to ignore the element of time in human affairs."¹⁶

Frankfurter's loyalties underwent their severest test when Roosevelt, without advance warning, presented a Court reorganization bill to Congress on February 5, 1937. With a majority of the Court having struck down significant New Deal legislation by the end of 1936, Roosevelt proposed after his sweeping re-election victory the appointment of an additional justice for every member of the Court over the age of seventy who refused to retire (up to a total of fifteen). Caught between his veneration of Brandeis and of the Supreme Court, on the one hand, and his adoration of Roosevelt on the other, Frankfurter resolved neither to criticize nor to defend the bill in public. The professor resolved his predicament by confidentially furnishing FDR with material sharply critical of the Court. In speaking with a close friend, Frankfurter confided that anything he would be compelled to say would be viewed not as the judgment of the authoritative scholar, but as that of "the Jew, the 'red,' and the 'alien,'" thus only fanning "the flames of ignorance, of misrepresentation, and of passion." He agreed with FDR not to accept a compromise when the Court began to reverse itself and approve New Deal legislation, or when ailing Associate Justice Willis Van Devanter resigned, giving Roosevelt a (rejected) chance to end the battle gracefully. "It's strange," Frankfurter wrote to Mack, "how the bottom of my confidence in the process of the Court has largely dropped out since the somersault of this year." Finally, after 168 days, with even close ally Governor Herbert Lehman of New York unexpectedly deserting the president in July, FDR's proposal went down to defeat.¹⁷

Convinced that Lehman's public stand offended "the good taste and the decorum of friendship," Frankfurter offered Roosevelt a welcome argument for a State of the Union address that would dress up surrender as a qualified victory. Ever the stalwart soldier, he averred that the Supreme Court reversed itself "only after it had become the duty of the President to protest the want of cooperation between the judicial and legislative branches of Government and to insist that what was needed was not a change in the Constitution but a proper interpretation of our fundamental law." FDR's choice the same month to have Van Devanter's place taken by New Deal loyalist Hugo L. Black of Alabama encouraged liberals; Solicitor General Stanley Reed would replace the retiring conservative George Sutherland. Yet the Court battle divided the Democratic Party and greatly strengthened the anti-Roosevelt forces. In the summer of 1938, FDR's intervention in state primaries against his party's conservative leaders suffered "a humiliating drubbing."¹⁸ Under the circumstances, the question at the same moment of filling Cardozo's vacant seat loomed large.

Eulogizing the late Associate Justice in an unsigned editorial for the *Boston Herald*, Frankfurter hailed both his legal career and the fact that it must be “incomprehensible” to “Herr Hitler to read of the mourning of the whole American people without regard to race, color, creed or political affiliation over the death of Cardozo the Jew.” Like Brandeis, Frankfurter realized early the dangers of the Third Reich, though neither could move FDR or the State Department to loosen the country’s restrictive immigration quotas. “Something inside of me snapped,” he informed Lippmann regarding the latter’s column in 1933 that described the German chancellor as “the authentic voice of a genuinely civilized people” and blamed Jewish “*parvenus*” in Germany for the Nazi attacks on Jews. Frankfurter helped organize “The University in Exile” for some ousted Jewish academics, but thought it improper to impose upon his friendship with the president to have an uncle (a reknowned Judaica scholar in Vienna) released from arrest in March 1938. Responding to Frankfurter’s cable, the pro-Nazi Nancy Astor obtained the release of the elderly man, who would die of natural causes three years later as he was about to depart for the United States.¹⁹

The German take-over of Austria in March, 1938, followed immediately thereafter by the persecution of Austria’s Jews, stirred American public opinion and thus Roosevelt to action. In cabinet, FDR suggested that the U.S. quotas for Germany and Austria be combined for what he preferred to call “political refugees.” Four months later, his initiative led numerous governments to meet at Evian-les-Bains for a discussion about facilitating and financing the emigration of these threatened human beings. The dispatch of American citizen James McDonald to the French resort town encouraged Frankfurter, who urged the former League of Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (Jewish and Other) Coming from Germany to summon explicitly “not the charitable impulses of this country but the sincerity of its professed faith.” We must establish, a postscript letter added, an international, non-sectarian agency entrusted with the entire refugee problem, with the granting of visas also subjected to some generalized standards not left to individual discretion. Governments and private philanthropy had to take part, Frankfurter stressed, and serious exploration of opportunities in Central and South America for mass settlement undertaken. His hopes were misplaced. Those assembled at the Evian Conference on Refugees evaded the urgent call of conscience.²⁰

The concerted campaign for Frankfurter to succeed Cardozo began soon after the Evian Conference passed into history. On August 8, Senator George W. Norris of Nebraska, who had already met with Corcoran on the matter,

released his own supportive letter to FDR: "There is no man in the public eye who so fully and truly represents the philosophy of government" of "the two great statesmen" Holmes and Cardozo, and the president would "perpetuate" the American people's faith in him if he placed Frankfurter on the bench. Coming from a highly respected old Progressive and leader of the liberal Republicans, this endorsement helped dispel some of Roosevelt's concerns about the under-representation of the West among the Brethren. Even David Lawrence, dean of conservative columnists, conceded that Frankfurter "at least has a high respect for the tradition of the Supreme Court and its background." Another boost came towards the end of September, when a poll of the American Bar Association revealed that Frankfurter's name was mentioned five times more than any other candidate, particularly impressive in light of the fact that 62 percent of the respondents opposed Roosevelt.²¹

William Allen White, acclaimed publisher of Kansas's *Emporia Gazette*, hesitated about writing to FDR in support of Frankfurter. Although admiring the latter, this liberal Republican explained to a friend: "Would not his appointment to succeed Cardozo give Jew baiters a chance to say that the Jews have preempted a seat on the Court? Also the big rich reactionaries, Jew and Gentile, have made Felix Frankfurter their head devil." Would not the rich Gentiles be free, he pondered, to "encourage, more or less secretly, anti-Semitic propaganda?" But he overcame these worries, writing Roosevelt that a "seven dollar night letter" sent by White a day or two before Cardozo was named by President Hoover "had weighed somewhat in the balance." "If I could have one word to say to you now," he closed, it would be to urge Frankfurter's appointment.²²

Still, Roosevelt dallied. In May 1937, he had hinted to Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Jr. that even if Brandeis or Cardozo stepped down, he probably could not appoint Frankfurter. Asked then about a preference for Frankfurter or James Landis, the current dean of the Harvard Law School, Morgenthau said the second "by all means." FDR appeared to favor the first, but he noted, "I think I would have a terrible time getting Frankfurter confirmed." This concern continued to haunt him in September 1938. When he heard Attorney General Homer Cummings mention a favorite choice – not Frankfurter – the president replied that he still did not have a definite candidate. He rejected the names offered by Cummings that September 18.²³

The same day, Ickes heard disconcerting news from Corcoran, who had unceasingly lobbied for Frankfurter's case. The president had decided on the

law professor, he reported, “but the rich Jews are objecting. Even Sulzberger of the *New York Times* is on that side.” They were not opposed to Frankfurter, but they think that his appointment would increase anti-Jewish prejudice in the country. Some hope existed that Brandeis would resign, in which event FDR would probably appoint Frankfurter. Added an indignant Ickes: “If Brandeis does not resign until after this Administration comes to an end and then a reactionary is appointed to succeed him, Brandeis will have something to answer for to the liberals of the country.”²⁴

This first mention of Jews objecting to Frankfurter had received a ringing denunciation the previous month in the liberal-left *Nation*. Claiming that “Anti-Semitism is Here,” an editorial chastised Roosevelt opponents who damned the Jews for the administration’s alleged sins. “Frankfurter” had come to symbolize Jewish radicalism in the New Deal, notwithstanding that the scholar was an uncompromising constitutionalist and a moderate liberal in his political views. Growing intolerance explained the attacks against Frankfurter protégé Benjamin V. Cohen, labor leaders David Dubinsky and Sidney Hillman, and the civil liberties lawyer Morris Ernst, all of them tarred as subversive individuals and part of the “Jewish menace.” Jews in the business world shared the attitudes of their Gentile counterparts, but their emotions forced them to a defensive position hardly less dangerous – “a sort of inverted anti-Semitism.” The only hope of burning through “the fog of race hatred or of halting its spread,” the magazine declared, “is to strengthen every democratic force in the country” and to preserve the American ideal of tolerance and the equality of races.²⁵

Rumors about the anxiety of “rich Jews” and of Sulzberger regarding Frankfurter’s possible selection to the highest court in the land worried Julian Mack intensely. Sharing the *weltanschauung* of his friends Brandeis and Frankfurter, and having served for many years in an executive capacity for several Jewish organizations, the seventy-two-year-old judge expressed himself in a private communication on October 5 to Roosevelt. Hearing newspaper reports that wealthy Jews were frightened at the prospect of the appointment and election of their co-religionists to high office, fearing that this would bring an outcry from antisemites, Mack conveyed his humiliation that “there are some of my fellow Jews who not only have this fear, but do not hesitate to endeavor to instill it into our non-Jewish fellowmen.” “Self-respecting American Jews,” he proclaimed, “would not for this reason neglect their duties or abdicate their rights and privileges as American citizens.”²⁶

FDR, one of Mack’s many admirers, replied two weeks later with an

unequivocal statement that had been drafted by Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles:

I feel it is peculiarly important – just because of the waves of persecution and discrimination which are mounting in other parts of the world – that we in this country make it clear that citizens of the United States are elected or selected for positions of responsibility solely because of their qualifications, experience, and character, and without regard to their religious faith. By so doing, the United States can hold aloft as a beacon the faith of the American people in the right to freedom of worship and in human liberty at a moment when the assertion of our faith in these principles will unquestionably act as an encouragement to peoples in every other part of the world.²⁷

The president’s response may have recalled Holmes’s pronouncement (oft-quoted by Frankfurter) that “we live by symbols,” but he had already told Frankfurter on October 8 why he could not be selected to succeed Cardozo. Taking him to “a dinky hole” of a study during a week-end visit by Felix and his wife Marion to his Hyde Park home in Dutchess County, FDR explained: “however much I’d like to appoint you to the court because that’s where you ought to be,” he had given a definite promise to senators and party people that the next appointment to the Court would be someone west of the Mississippi. (A few days later, in replying to William Allen White, FDR stressed his feeling that the Court should be “representative of every section of the United States.”) “I perfectly understand,” the greatly embarrassed professor retorted, and then acceded to Roosevelt’s request to give his judgment on some individuals who had been suggested. Offering to review their judicial opinions and write an evaluation of what these “justifiably manifested,” Frankfurter returned to Cambridge. He set to the task and “attended,” as he recalled years later, “to his knitting.” FDR cautioned the press not to “go out on a limb” by predicting the professor’s appointment, saying that this was “just the Frankfurters’ annual visit.”²⁸

With Brandeis’s knowledge, Frankfurter also discussed Palestine with Roosevelt during that same weekend. Wishing FDR to intervene against a reported plan by London to close the gates of Palestine to Jewish immigration, he found the president especially “miseducated” about that country’s absorptive capacity. During their talk, a conversation markedly absent from his recorded

reminiscences, Frankfurter had more success in speaking of Palestine as a symbol. The president subsequently suggested that his guest dictate a note which Roosevelt might send to British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain. Frankfurter, aided by Benjamin Cohen, sent the following draft on October 13th to the White House:

With increased pressure on the Jews in Central Europe, the tasks of sheer humanity we set for ourselves at the Evian Conference have become even more difficult of fulfillment. Apart from mere numbers Palestine is a significant symbol of hope to Jewry. Therefore I earnestly urge that no decision may be made which would close the gates of Palestine to the Jews. Shutting the gates of Palestine to Jews would greatly embarrass efforts towards genuine appeasement because it would be interpreted as a disturbing symbol of anti-Semitism.²⁹

The Zionist Organization of America, spearheaded by Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, galvanized Jewish, Protestant, and Catholic opinion across the United States to send thousands of telegrams per week in like vein to the White House. Governor Lehman and scores of politicians weighed in as well. At the urging of Frankfurter and Cohen, Brandeis was summoned by FDR (who often called him affectionately “Old Isaiah”) on October 16. The chief executive, Brandeis soon reported to Frankfurter, “went very far” in appreciating the need of keeping Palestine “whole and of making it Jewish.” As for possible havens other than Palestine for Jews, he spoke to Brandeis of these as “satellites,” and there was no specific talk of them.³⁰

In the midst of these developments, a close friend of both Frankfurter and of Sulzberger suddenly heard the latter’s position regarding the persistent rumor that he had headed a delegation to Roosevelt, urging against the professor’s elevation to the Supreme Court. The publisher and president of the *New York Times* informed Jacob Billikopf, executive director of the Federation of Jewish Charities, that he had been “distressed” about the widespread report, because “there was no truth in it.” He did think it a mistake on two counts to have Frankfurter, whom he held in “extraordinary esteem,” succeed Cardozo: no reason existed why the Jews should have a “lien” on this position, while the American people supposed Frankfurter to be the “brains” behind the New Deal. Uncertain what to do, Sulzberger had shared his views with Henry Morgenthau Sr., who had lobbied for Wilson’s choice of Brandeis to the

Court. If the elder man felt the same way, the publisher observed, he should make use of these ideas "any way you see fit" while sponsoring them as his own. Morgenthau, a major contributor to FDR's electoral campaigns, replied that he would think about the matter. According to Sulzberger, Morgenthau must have spoken to Corcoran, and this gave rise to the story, which originally appeared in the Scripps-Howard papers, was reproduced in the American press, and was "vigorously commented upon" in the *Nation*.

"I was very foolish," Sulzberger went on, to have spoken to Morgenthau, but the *Times's* top executive never thought of approaching Roosevelt on the matter. Such a step on his part or that of anyone else would have been "reprehensible." While my views may be all wrong," Sulzberger concluded, "my paper will shout with joy if the president makes the appointment." Billikopf took definite issue with the arguments advanced by his friend, who conceded that "you may be right." Their conversation ended with Sulzberger observing that Billikopf would do him a great kindness if he corrected "this wrong impression" about the publisher's "alleged activity" against Frankfurter's appointment.³¹

Billikopf did so, first writing to Frankfurter about the lengthy conversation and then, relying on Sulzberger's version, assuring fellow diners (all Gentiles) at the University of Pennsylvania Faculty Club that Sulzberger had not headed a Jewish delegation to FDR advising against Frankfurter. Taking advantage of the occasion, so he wrote to Sulzberger, he raised the publisher's arguments before the intelligent group to see their reaction. Not one present, including some critical of the New Deal, recognized any merit therein. Hearing that Billikopf knew and thought highly of Sulzberger, one law professor then turned to him with this query: "Billie, I hope you don't subscribe to any of the views expressed by some of your Jewish friends." Glad to have the opportunity to discuss "the F.F. matter" with folk "in touch with currents of public opinion," the letter continued, he was especially happy to hear all of them express the view that to withhold the appointment because Frankfurter was a Jew "would be in violation of one's conception of the traditionally Democratic society that makes America what she has been, and something *very distinctive* and *very precious*!"³²

Always proud to acknowledge his maternal American Revolutionary ancestors of Sephardic origin, Sulzberger had long defined Judaism strictly as a religion. The non-observant New Yorker never subscribed to the view that "all Jews are brothers," and objected to what he termed "Ghetto living or thinking or acting merely because a portion of the community wishes to impose such a way of life upon those who happen to be Jews." In 1933, he thought that

it would be a “distinct mistake” for two of his Jewish friends to run for the New York City mayoralty at a time when the state’s governor was Jewish. The publisher opposed a boycott of German goods, which might induce Hitler to go to war, because he was “required to act as an American and not as a Jew.” Anti-Nazi agitation by groups like the American Jewish Congress, headed by Rabbi Wise, he feared “would help to destroy me.” It would be “dangerous in the extreme,” Sulzberger wrote to Treasury secretary Morgenthau after a wave of sit-down strikes had struck the country, if the labor leaders of the Pacific coast were of the Jewish “faith.” Worried lest the *New York Times* be seen as “The Jewish Times,” he (like father-in-law Adolph Ochs) refused to appoint a Jew to leading posts on the family-owned newspaper or to give his Jewish employees bylines carrying their full names. In the same vein, the *Times* editorialized after the Evian Conference that “in our days’ struggle” there were no Jews and no Gentiles: “There are only those who love freedom and those who do not.”³³

Zionism especially drew Sulzberger’s wrath. Jews’ greatest value to the world, read a private 1930 draft, was their ability to “see across” the “chauvinistic boundary lines” of the countries where they lived to “view with understanding those who talk other tongues than their own.” The more Palestine became a reality, he pointed out to Nathan Straus of the American Palestine Campaign in April, 1933, “so much more weight is lent to the statement that the Jew in other lands is a foreigner.” He felt particularly “a foreigner” during a first (and last) trip to the Holy Land in early 1937, where he met co-religionists who were Jews “racially and nationally,” and decided that “if there was to be any emotional conflict between America as my land and this as my land I must choose America, even if that were to mean that I can no longer be a Jew.” Sulzberger assured the president of the Reform movement’s Union of American Hebrew Congregations, on whose executive board he served, that after a visit to the Holy Land “one returns in the most irreligious frame of mind.”³⁴

When Britain’s Peel Commission proposed soon thereafter the partition of Palestine into an Arab state and a small Jewish commonwealth, the *Times* became a pulpit for the bi-nationalist views of Hebrew University president Judah Magnes. “If statehood is finally given to the Jews,” Sulzberger replied to an executive of the United Palestine Appeal, “it would be one of the most disastrous things that could happen.” Understandably, he favored a sizeable haven other than Palestine for Jews, much as Bernard Baruch began proposing a non-sectarian “United States of Africa” in April, 1938, that would take refugees from Europe. (The plan, wrote Brandeis to a receptive Frankfurter,

proved conclusively that Baruch "has no knowledge of the Jewish question; that he has the American-German-Jewish fears of anti-Semitism in America; that these are greatly augmented by the fears inherent in the rich; that "Wenn Gott nur uns gesund erhalt" is his prayer.")³⁵

Henry Morgenthau Sr. was an ideal choice for Sulzberger to convey to FDR his feelings about Frankfurter and the Supreme Court. A long-time friend of Ochs's, Sulzberger's wife Iphigene (and even FDR) calling him "Uncle Henry," the Jewish financier had established a distinguished career in the course of his eighty-two years. As U.S. ambassador to Turkey, he provided crucial humanitarian aid to Palestinian Jewry and to Armenians during World War I; subsequently, he helped implement the transfer of Greeks and Turks when chairman of the League of Nations' Refugee Settlement Commission. He also served on the boards of the American Red Cross and a number of Jewish organizations.

A run-in with Weizmann and Frankfurter regarding his effort before the U.S. entered the First World War to bring about a separate Allied peace with Turkey, joined to his faith in American-Jewish assimilation, turned Morgenthau into a bitter opponent of Jewish nationalism. In 1921, he charged that Zionism, if successful, "would cost the Jews of America most of what they have gained in liberty, equality, and fraternity." When FDR, a member of Harvard's Board of Overseers, consulted him about how to handle the large percentage of Jewish students at the college, he agreed that they bring it to the Board for discussion. (The members ultimately agreed that the number of Jews be reduced by one or two percent annually until it reached 15 percent of the student body.) Morgenthau placed his faith, one far removed from traditional Judaism, in the promise of America.³⁶

Sulzberger did esteem Frankfurter, however much they differed on certain issues besides Zionism. When the American Newspaper Guild began unionizing reporters in 1933, Sulzberger felt that it would undermine their impartiality and produce uniform points of view. "Greatly distressed," he contacted Frankfurter, who advised him to speak directly with the guild's president, Heywood Broun. The two men appeared to make some headway when Broun suddenly died; the news and editorial departments of the *Times* did not join a union shop. Two years later, Sulzberger informed a friend that Frankfurter impressed him, from a recent conversation, as "a serious student of government, and not at all as a radical." The *Times* published Frankfurter's long letter to the editor in November, 1937, citing the Peel Commission's judgment that Haj Amin al-Husseini, the Mufti of Jerusalem, had advanced

a “sanguinary nationalism” against the Jews of Palestine since the 1920’s, and should not be permitted to return after fleeing British arrest.³⁷

At a dinner at Sulzberger’s home for the Frankfurters in 1937, Felix bet that there would not be further changes in the Supreme Court due to death or resignation in the present Roosevelt term. With relish, Sulzberger recalled that bet in February, 1938, writing to the professor: “The only words I can add are – AND HOW!” The barb did not prevent Frankfurter from penning a sharp letter to Sulzberger two months later, to Brandeis’ delight, criticizing the *Times*’s editorial handling of malfeasance by stock manipulators as compared to the hard line it had preached when it came to wrongdoing by labor leaders such as John L. Lewis of the United Mine Workers. There is no record of a response.³⁸

On November 15, 1938, a few days after the savagery of *Kristallnacht* stirred the White House to take some action on behalf of Jews under the Third Reich, Frankfurter replied to Billikopf’s report about his talk two weeks earlier with Sulzberger. Personally, the professor began, “it is a matter of complete indifference to me, as indeed is this whole Supreme Court talk.” What he felt of “profoundest concern” was the number of prominent Jews “who are unwittingly embracing Hitlerism by sponsoring a position of political inferiority and second-rate citizenship for Jews.” He was “shocked out of his boots” to learn of some important Jews who hoped for Lehman’s defeat because of their fear of antisemitism, and of one actually suggesting to a high, Gentile official in Washington that he get rid of two of his Jewish assistants because of the hurtful effect upon business interest to have Jews in these positions. The only significance of “the Sulzberger episode,” where the publisher “got someone who is even more influential perhaps than he is” to communicate his views directly to the president, is “its relation to one’s conception of Americanism.” And considering that Sulzberger “is the dominant head of the most powerful newspaper in the land,” that is “of deep significance.” Frankfurter closed by quoting the historian R. H. Tawney, apropos of Chamberlain’s surrender at Munich two months earlier of Czechoslovakia’s Sudetenland area to Hitler in the hope of avoiding world war: “I’d rather die standing than live on my knees.”³⁹

Two days later, after consulting with Brandeis, Frankfurter sent a memorandum to the Oval Office on some of the candidates mentioned to him in October by Roosevelt. FDR wished for an individual of stature, and so told Cummings that the country “would not be very much stirred” by the appointment of a lackluster westerner whom the Attorney General put forth on the 18th. Cummings replied that he sympathized with the president’s desire to find someone both “colorful” and “safe,” but it had been his experience that

this combination was rare, and that "most of the colorful people get into trouble at one time or another." At the month's end, the Attorney General sent data on three possible appointees; Frankfurter's name did not appear. Roosevelt continued to delay, fully aware that a nominee could not be confirmed in any event until Congress reconvened in January, 1939.⁴⁰

A campaign began to persuade Brandeis to resign, one friendly column reporting that in such a case his old friend and disciple "is all but certain" to fill that seat. Brandeis agreed with Frankfurter that Billikopf's report on Sulzberger and the Morgenthau, Sr., connection was "illuminating," yet he found it "only one of many instances of the rich Jews' folly." Rather than step down, however, the Associate Justice continued to warn visitors to his home about the "cravenly foolish" action taken by 110 Downing Street to invite several Arab countries to discuss the Palestine question. He saw the president again at the latter's request, to hear that his host fully appreciated the "absurdity" of a British proposition to have Britain Guiana, rather than Palestine, opened to large Jewish colonization. Since he was about to leave for a ten-day vacation, the president asked Brandeis to communicate with him if the justice thought it worthwhile, and he would quickly return to Washington.⁴¹

In fact, FDR had quietly proceeded on a search for global settlement to aid what he termed "the unfortunate victims" of German persecution. Roosevelt thought that such projects should include only a limited number of Jews, perhaps because speech writer Samuel Rosenman, who would approvingly forward Baruch's Africa proposal to the White House a few weeks later, agreed with his co-religionist that "it is no solution to create a world ghetto instead of many local ones." Given Sulzberger's anxiety about mounting antisemitism in the United States, it came as no surprise that a *New York Times* editorial on November 16, 1938, announced that the United States, with its millions of unemployed, could no longer carry on its glorious tradition of unlimited haven; the "victims of religious and political persecution" should be settled in a "sparsely populated colony" where they could carve out "a new civilization in a jungle or a wasteland." Lippmann also advocated a large-scale effort after *Kristallnacht* to secure colonies for "the helpless Jews within Germany" and "ethnic minorities of all kinds" in that "whole region of Central Europe which at Munich was opened to Nazi dominion"; he soon advanced Africa for "surplus" Jewish population.⁴²

Completely unaware of Roosevelt's confidential efforts, the Brandeis circle pressed on with its agenda. The group dismissed anything but the biblical Promised Land as a chimera. Frankfurter thanked Roosevelt for

issuing a statement, while on vacation in Warm Springs, Georgia, that Palestine represented the obvious first source of relief for the victims of (as the professor put it) “the latest and largest Nazi barbarities.” One year earlier, Frankfurter had thought that the Peel Commission’s talk of “state” and “sovereignty” was “romanticism – chasing a mirage.” Now he emphasized to FDR that “Palestine is here and now – that and Transjordan – as an obligation of action by Gt. Britain, instead of pious words.” Thinking that the president’s declaration “should be helpful now and hereafter,” Brandeis got Cohen to let FDR know that he thought the recent statement on Palestine “fine.”⁴³

Brandeis and Ickes, who still had not forgiven the Associate Justice over the Court “packing” fight, saw “eye to eye” on the Jewish situation. Over tea, Brandeis remarked to Harold and Jane Ickes that Palestine could take care of 50,000 Jewish refugees this year and an equal number for several years to come. Ickes spoke about the “cowardice on the part of the rich Jews of America,” wishing that he could get 200 or 300 of them together in a room and tell them they “couldn’t hope to save their money by meekly accepting whatever humiliations others chose to impose upon them.” The Catholic minority in America, he pointed out, because it was well organized, active, and aggressive, was able to protect co-religionists and get more recognition for them than their numbers warranted. Brandeis agreed completely, saying that “there was a certain type of rich Jew who was a coward.” Recorded Ickes in his diary: “According to him, these were German Jews, and he spoke of them with the same contempt that I feel for them.” (In light of earlier evidence, at least Baruch, Sulzberger, and Morgenthau Sr., had to be in Brandeis’s mind.)⁴⁴

Come December, Roosevelt could not put off much longer the question of Cardozo’s vacant seat. Jim Farley, adroit manager of FDR’s 1932 presidential bid, urged the appointment of someone from west of the Mississippi River, which comprised two-thirds of the entire country and one-third of its population. The president still thought that that vast area demanded one justice on the bench, but he had not found an individual who was “of sufficient stature.” Frankfurter wanted the post “in the worst way,” Roosevelt confided in Farley, but he had to inform the Harvard law professor that the choice “had to go west.” “In the second place,” he added, “I told Felix that I could not appoint another Jew.” Very annoyed at the pressure coming from Corcoran and others of the professor’s allies, FDR continued to look elsewhere for a suitable appointee.⁴⁵

“Tommy the Cork,” as FDR dubbed Corcoran, and his confreres did not let up. Friendly senators continued to receive damaging information

about prospective candidates; the mailboxes of wavering senators were stuffed with pro-Frankfurter telegrams and letters. Every evening, Corcoran's many telephone calls to Cambridge kept his former professor up-to-date. These forces received important support from Robert H. Jackson, the new Solicitor General and a friend of Roosevelt's, who noted to FDR that Black and Reed had not been known for legal scholarship. The learned Frankfurter, however, had the ability to face Chief Justice Charles E. Hughes in conference "and hold his own in discussion." Stone, who had complained to Frankfurter of Black's quixotic behavior in his first dissents on the Court, would argue a similar point to Roosevelt about the professor's talents in helping contain the wily Hughes.⁴⁶

FDR continued to make good use of Frankfurter's services that same month, but his past doubts lingered. At lunch at the White House on December 10, the professor joined a small group to discuss a matter "in the strictest confidence" which FDR deemed "very close to my heart" – the creation at Hyde Park of a library to house all his files and numerous other materials. Not long afterward, Frankfurter began working, at Roosevelt's request, with Rosenman on the official account of the Court packing" plan in an introduction to a volume of the President's Public Papers. Yet in a talk with Cummings on the 18th, Roosevelt remarked that if Brandeis retired "the matter would be simplified so far as Frankfurter was concerned." Reluctant as ever, the Attorney General replied: "I always have assumed that when Brandeis retired, Frankfurter would get his place." The difficulty remained: Appointing Frankfurter before Brandeis's retirement meant two justices from Massachusetts, as well as two Jews on the Court.⁴⁷

Meeting in New York, at Rosenman's request, with a few close Jewish friends to discuss an American Jewish Committee report on rising antisemitism in America, Frankfurter hinted at his frustration regarding the appointment that he desperately wanted but could not openly pursue. Insisting that "Jews should take themselves for granted as Americans who were born Jews," and remarkably citing himself as a Jew "without any of the usual 'Jewish' conflicts or difficulties," he singled out Sulzberger for sharp criticism. The *Times*, unlike the *Herald Tribune*, did not publicize a recent speech by Ickes against the Nazi government. Sulzberger and other like him, Frankfurter continued with a hint to his own prospects, had acted similarly in the matter of appointment of Jews to public office, "motivated generally by fear that such appointments will aggravate anti-Jewish feeling." This typified the attitude of a number of influential Jews who, because they were Jews, did not "discharge their responsibilities as Americans in the important areas of American life within which they function."

The Committee should sponsor programs, he thought, which emphasized Jewish contributions to American life and made clear that America “is a fellowship in which the accident of birth has no influence on the status of an individual citizen.” Echoing his letter to Billikopf a month earlier, he concluded that the “recent timid behavior of certain influential Jews, if carried to its logical conclusion, will result in a self-created, second-class citizenship.”⁴⁸

By the year’s end, Frankfurter’s fondest hope seemed out of reach. On December 27, signing his letter as “ever faithfully yours,” “F.F.” sent “Frank” his detailed comments to Roosevelt’s draft about the Court “packing” plan. “Throughout,” he emphasized, “you should appear as the real guardian of the Constitution adequate to all the needs of the nation if only judges would be obedient to the majestic powers of the Constitution.” Frankfurter indicated in a second letter that day his availability to discuss lower court appointments, as the president had wished, and he joined with his wife in wishing FDR “our warmest wishes.” Roosevelt telephoned him shortly thereafter, seeking his opinion about Dean Wiley Rutledge of the University of Iowa law school, who had publicly supported the Court “packing” scheme. On the basis of what Frankfurter’s “net of inquiry had fished up,” he wrote a memorandum to FDR indicating that Rutledge was qualified for the Court and would be a “properly” appointed man.⁴⁹

Frankfurter’s friends, led by Ickes, stepped up their pressure on the president. The Interior secretary understood the delicacy involved, writing that Roosevelt “has a real streak of stubbornness and he does not like to have anyone try to force his hand.” On the 29th, he urged Frankfurter’s candidacy during a private interview, asserting that “he was a legal statesman who stood head and shoulder above every other possible appointee.” FDR agreed with this estimate, and said that Frankfurter would be appointed when Brandeis resigned, sure that this would occur during his term of office. Replying that this was not a certainty, and it would be “a terrible thing” if relying upon such an event Frankfurter should fail of appointment, Ickes concluded their talk by declaring that if appointed now, the professor’s ability and learning were such that “he will dominate the Supreme Court for fifteen or twenty years to come. The result will be that, probably after you are dead, it will still be your Supreme Court.” Roosevelt did not reply. A worried Ickes found allies in presidential secretary “Missy” Le Hand and Roosevelt aide Harold Hopkins, the latter telling FDR to go on the theory that this would be his last opportunity to make a Court appointment. Corcoran got Norris to call FDR, and Ickes made another effort to sway Roosevelt. At Ickes’s suggestion,

Hopkins and Corcoran spoke to a receptive Murphy, recently appointed Attorney General; Hopkins also talked to Jackson, who agreed that if the liberal position of the Court were to be held, "Frankfurter must go in."⁵⁰ On the evening of January 4, 1939, it finally came to pass with the chief executive's telephone call to Cambridge.

When the seventy-sixth Congress convened the next day at noon, the Senate received word from the White House of Frankfurter's nomination. Two hours later, as Murphy and Ickes sat down to lunch at the Interior Department, Corcoran entered with two magnums of champagne, and soon they were joined by Hopkins, Jackson, Le Hand, Security Exchange Commission chairman William O. Douglas, Roosevelt advisor on labor affairs David Niles, and Peggy Dowd, Corcoran's wife and secretary. Particularly joyous, Jackson exclaimed that now he could argue a government case before a justice who would listen to his argument with "sympathy and understanding." All of the "very happy" party regarded the appointment, Ickes wrote in his diary, as "the most significant and worthwhile thing that the President has done. He has solidified his Supreme Court victory, and, regardless of who may be President during the next few years, there will be on the bench of the Supreme Court a group of liberals under aggressive, forthright, and intelligent leadership." Hearing later from Le Hand about the festive gathering, FDR responded: "I suspect that this was a little bunch of conspirators, and I think, too, that if I had decided against them they would have accepted my decision cheerfully and loyally."⁵¹

In light of "all the ridiculous stories which have been running around involving me and you, and which I know must have reached your attention," Sulzberger rushed to extend to Frankfurter the same day his "sincere congratulations on this greatest of all tributes that could be paid to you." The brief letter ended: "As one of your many friends and admirers, I can only assure you of my pride and satisfaction in this well deserved honor." An editorial in his newspaper then predicted "approvingly" that Frankfurter would serve "no narrow prejudices," would "be free from partisanship," and "will reveal the organic conservatism which the hard-won victories [that] won liberty in the past can yield a new birth of freedom." Frankfurter, in turn, thanked Sulzberger for his "warm words," along with this: "knowing the conscience that dictates the policies of the New York Times, I am truly appreciative of its support of the president's nomination."⁵²

Other newspaper coverage proved equally favorable, and congratulatory messages poured in from past foes and friends alike. Retired Harvard president

A. Lawrence Lowell, a long-time opponent of Frankfurter's regarding three major issues – the Brandeis appointment, that university's quotas against Jews which he had initiated, and the Sacco-Vanzetti trial – conveyed his conviction that the “first-rate” appointee would be “no man's tool, but stand squarely upon your own legal principles.” Especially important to Frankfurter was a short message from Brandeis, who was certain that Roosevelt had selected the Harvard professor as “a protest” against Hitler and Mussolini: “F.D.'s action is grand – for several reasons. Hope you will join us soon.”⁵³

In retrospect, Frankfurter acknowledged that his origins played a not insignificant role in the entire drama. “With all the brutal, barbaric behavior of Germany and generally the infection that was caused thereby elsewhere in the spread of anti-Semitism, and not least in this country,” he told an interviewer, “for the President of the United States to appoint a Jew to the Supreme Court had such significance for me to make it impossible to have said ‘no.’” Indeed, within forty-eight hours, the leading Danish newspaper carried a front-page headline: “ROOSEVELT APPOINTS JEW TO SUPREME COURT,” confirming Frankfurter's belief that that was the appointment's “historical significance.”⁵⁴

Others concurred at the time. Father John Ryan offered his opinion to Frankfurter that the appointment would “go far to offset or moderate the attitude of enmity toward your people which is so deplorable in more than one country today,” while *Boston Herald* publisher Frank Buxton considered the president's step “another little caveat to Hitler.” Wise fully agreed, cabling FDR that the appointment and his recent speech to Congress about democratic ideals were “a double-barreled reply to Hitlerism. The nation at its highest rises up and calls you blessed.” Senator William Borah of Iowa, replying to a constituent who complained that “we are almost entirely governed by the Jews and Catholics,” observed that he did not want to get in the position “of applying Hitler's principles in this country.” On the other hand, Count Jerzy Potocki, Poland's ambassador to the United States, informed his superiors that the newly appointed Frankfurter, along with personal friends of Roosevelt such as Baruch, Morgenthau, and Lehman, were “connected by unbreakable ties with international Jewry.” Posing as representatives of “Americanism” and “defenders of democracy,” he warned, they “mysteriously” influenced the president to procure “enormous stocks for the coming war, for which the Jews are striving consciously,” and to divert public attention from “ever-growing” domestic antisemitism by “talking about the necessity of defending faith and individual liberty against the onslaught of Fascism.”⁵⁵

In the end, a combination of different circumstances tipped the scales in Frankfurter's favor. The symbolic gesture to Jews and to the world in light of global events as the New Year 1939 dawned played a part. FDR had suggested this to Mack three months earlier, and the charge to Congress in his annual address on January 4, 1939, was clear: "Storms from abroad directly challenge three institutions indispensable to Americans, now as always. The first is religion. It is the source of the other two – democracy and international faith." Undoubtedly, Frankfurter was the most qualified candidate, as Norris, Ickes, Jackson, and others had argued. FDR found very persuasive the argument of Stone, who a year earlier had confessed his own preference to Frankfurter, that the Cambridge academic's selection would make it a "distinguished Court." Brandeis was in failing health. And, perhaps above all, Roosevelt liked Frankfurter enormously. Other than his scintillating conversation, vivacious nature, and creative mind, the professor had maintained silence during the tempestuous Court "packing" battle, and his loyalty for and adulation of the president had no equal. Taking all these factors into account, Roosevelt reply to Laski's message of congratulations on selecting Frankfurter was not surprising: "I think Felix's nomination has pleased me more than anybody else in the whole country."⁵⁶

On January 12, Frankfurter appeared before the Senate Judiciary Committee, the first nominee in the Court's 150-year history to be subjected by committee to a full inquiry. While his long-time friend Dean Acheson sat alongside as counsel, Frankfurter took center stage. His talk learned and overwhelming, the professor moved the audience in the crowded caucus room to periodic applause. Nevada's Pat McCarran held up a copy of Laski's book *Communism*, and asked: "If it advocates the doctrine of Marxism, would you agree with it?" Frankfurter's retort was immediate: "Senator, I do not believe you have ever taken an oath to support the Constitution of the United States with fewer reservations than I have or would now, nor do I believe you are more attached to the theories and practices of Americanism than I am. I rest my answer on that statement." Cheers erupted from the crowd, and the hearing ended. On the morning of the 17th, a voice vote on the Senate floor carried unanimously in his favor. "Plainly delighted," as he appeared to Ickes, Frankfurter also felt that his appointment meant much to the liberal cause.⁵⁷

The Supreme Court reconvened on January 30, and Frankfurter, wearing a judicial robe presented to him by former colleagues at Harvard, was sworn in. Only "the initiated" could see that his hand shook, wrote a close friend who was present at the ceremony, as it had "for several weeks past." Later that day in his chambers, the newest Associate Justice wrote his first letter on

Court stationery, one which he thought revealed more of himself than could be found in a formal biographic memoir. "In the mysterious ways of Fate," he began, "the Dutchess County American and the Viennese American have for decades pursued the same directions of devotion to our beloved country." With a nod to FDR's fifty-seventh birthday, he continued: "And now, on your blessed birthday I am given the gift of opportunity for service to the Nation which, in any circumstances would be owing, but which I would rather have had at your hands than at those of any other President barring Lincoln."⁵⁸

For a brief period thereafter, Frankfurter led his liberal colleagues, soon to include Douglas and Murphy (replacements for Brandeis and Butler, respectively). In June 1940, the Court ruled in an opinion which he wrote, Stone alone in dissent, sustaining the compulsory flag salute in public schools against the claim of Jehovah's Witnesses that this action violated their religious beliefs. The First Amendment notwithstanding, Frankfurter insisted that "the binding tie of cohesive sentiment" must prevail: "The flag is the symbol of our national unity, transcending all internal differences, however large, within the framework of the Constitution." When a majority of the Court, led by Jackson (on the bench as of mid-1941), reversed the 1940 *Gobitis* judgment three years later, its only foreign-born member firmly stood by his earlier position with a dissenting statement so intensely personal that two colleagues had pleaded with him unsuccessfully to omit it:

One who belongs to the most vilified and persecuted minority in history is not likely to be insensible to the freedoms guaranteed by the constitution.... But as judges we are neither Jew nor Gentile, neither Catholic nor agnostic.... We owe equal attachment to the Constitution...whether we derive our citizenship from the earliest or the latest immigrants to these shores.... Judicial self-restraint is equally necessary whenever an exercise of political or legislative power is challenged.⁵⁹

A case involving the right of William Schneiderman to his American citizenship despite membership in the Communist party again revealed Frankfurter's patriotic yearnings, which had admittedly become a key element of his surrogate faith. At one of the Court's conferences, he noted that this case aroused in him sentiments that "could not be entertained by anyone else around this table." Speaking of his feelings when his father was naturalized and of his work representing the government in naturalization proceedings

as an assistant to Stimson, he conceded that "a convert is more zealous than one born to the faith." "As one who has no ties with any formal religion," he confessed, "perhaps the feelings that underline religious forms for me run into intensification of my feelings about American citizenship." Frankfurter concluded by reading a letter written to him two years earlier by Gaetano Salvemini, an Italian immigrant now a Harvard history professor, affirming that throwing away "not only my intellectual and moral but my juristic past" in favor of one's allegiance to the U.S. Constitution enabled the naturalized citizen to feel "at home" in America. He joined Chief Justice Stone in the minority (Jackson abstained), the majority of five stating that "under our traditions, beliefs are personal."⁶⁰

Ever struggling with "the claims of his Jewish heritage and his denial of its influence," as one historian has put it, Frankfurter distanced himself from his origins just when the Jewish people experienced its most anguished tragedy. While continuing to advise FDR energetically on numerous matters domestic and foreign, the Associate Justice remained detached in the years of the Holocaust, never pressing Roosevelt to act on behalf of Hitler's primary enemy. David Ben-Gurion, refused an interview with Frankfurter at the time of the professor's Court appointment, understood that "his life's ambition was... to reach the Supreme Court. His Zionism was only a desultory, secondary undertaking, not his heart's core." When this feisty leader of Palestinian Jewry pressed one year later for a Jewish fighting force to aid the Allies, Frankfurter insisted that recruitment take place "in other countries," and expressed his reluctance to speak in America on this issue. To militant American Zionist spokesman Abba Hillel Silver, the justice invoked Brandeis's policy never to appear on a platform while a member of the Court as grounds against speaking publicly about Palestine, "no matter how deeply, as you know, my sympathies are engaged." Yet Frankfurter did not follow Brandeis's example of unceasing efforts in private to aid stricken Jewry abroad. Only with the possibility of Jewish sovereignty hanging in the balance at the end of November, 1947, did he contact the president of the Phillipines to support the United Nations vote on a Jewish state and, in March, 1948, ask (unsuccessfully) Secretary of State George Marshall to see Weizmann.⁶¹

In the following years, Frankfurter's emphasis on judicial restraint and "disinterested inquiry pursued in the spirit of science" met its equal in Black's forceful defense of judicial assertiveness when First Amendment guarantees clashed with legislative judgment. He joined the majority in upholding the Smith Act, declaring it unlawful to organize a party that advocated violent

overthrow of the government (Black and Douglas dissenting), then found himself in the minority when protesting that the Court was entering a “political thicket” by deciding that grossly unequal voting districts in a state violated the Fourteenth Amendment. Since the Constitution did not offer a judicial remedy for every “political mischief,” read his dissent in *Baker v. Carr*, “in a democratic society like ours, relief must come through an aroused popular conscience of the people’s representatives.” At the same time, he worked closely with Chief Justice Earl Warren to secure a unanimous decision outlawing racial segregation in public schools, and wrote feelingly on the meaning of academic freedom.⁶²

In November, 1958, shortly after the Brethren had unanimously affirmed the rule of law in backing the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* desegregation ruling, Frankfurter suffered a “mild heart disturbance.” He returned to the Court after a period of recuperation, but suffered a stroke in April, 1962, from which he never fully recovered. On August 28, Frankfurter took leave with “reluctance,” so read his official letter of resignation, of “the institution whose concerns have been the absorbing interest of my life.” President John F. Kennedy, who immediately nominated Secretary of Labor Arthur Goldberg for the vacancy, led the nation in tribute: “Few judges have made so significant and lasting [an] impression upon the law. Few persons have made so important a contribution to our legal tradition and literature.” Awarded in 1963 the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation’s highest civilian honor, Frankfurter replied to Kennedy that it is “only by trying to convey to you my feelings about America and how they came to be almost religious feelings in their nature that I can tell you how deeply I feel the honor that you have bestowed on me.”⁶³

The *New York Times* accorded Frankfurter’s retirement major coverage. Aside from its lead story, the world’s newspaper of record found it difficult to think of the Court without the man “who has served it with such extraordinary vitality, perception, and effectivity (*sic*) for nearly a quarter of a century.” The former law professor with the “sharply inquiring eyes, the unquenchable curiosity, boundless energy, and profound devotion to the sanctity of the Court as a cornerstone of American liberty,” the editorial went on, “will be acutely missed.” Whether or not one agreed with his view of the Supreme Court’s role, no one could fail to appreciate “the high intellect and complete integrity that permeated Frankfurter’s opinions” right up to the last day that he occupied his chair. The tone of great praise then shifted to musings about the new nominee, including this caveat: “We must add that we do not like the

implication" that Goldberg's appointment to succeed Frankfurter reflects "that some kind of religious 'balance' has to be maintained on the Court."⁶⁴

The hand of Sulzberger, who had stepped down as publisher in 1961 but served from 1957 on as the *Times's* board chairman, in this last dramatic assertion was palpable. In December, 1959, in a testament written for his children which confessed that he was neither a "political" nor a "religious" Jew, Sulzberger had averred: "I don't feel that there must be a 'Jew' on the U.S. Supreme Court, although I would be worried if we went too long without one. By the same token I would not want to see too many on that bench nor have one appointed specifically to take the place of one who died or quit." News of Frankfurter's retirement and Goldberg's appointment, he informed his daughter-in-law Susan Dryfoos, brought to mind that he had gone down to see FDR after Cardozo's death with this message: It would be "a great mistake to name a Jew to replace a Jew, as though one place, and one place only, was assigned to them." Having listened attentively, the chief executive then said, according to what Sulzberger conveyed to Dryfoos: "I agree with you entirely, Arthur." He then appointed Frankfurter.⁶⁵

This later-day version differed considerably not only from what Sulzberger had told Billikopf in November, 1938, but from a memorandum that he wrote the day following a lunch at the White House on December 27, 1939. After FDR spoke about Germany's future, studies he had commissioned to locate lands capable of taking care of ten million refugees, and his own interest in the eastern slope of the Andes for this purpose, Sulzberger discussed the "ridiculous story" published by two columnists about his leading a delegation to speak against Frankfurter's appointment because "it was dangerous for Jews to hold positions of importance during these days when anti-Semitism was rife." While the president knew that this was not true, Sulzberger wished to add that he had never entertained any thought of doing so. "What had given me concern, and still did," the 1939 memorandum continued, "was the naming of a Jew to succeed a Jew on the Court or a Catholic to succeed a Catholic, etc. Such a practice made it appear as if a particular religion had a lien on a certain seat or seats." FDR, concluded the account, "nodded his assent to this and seemed in entire accord."⁶⁶

In sending Frankfurter a congratulatory letter upon his retirement, Sulzberger had actually thought of including his recollections about the professor's Court appointment. This draft, drawn up by managing editor Turner Catledge, stated that Sulzberger had gone to Roosevelt even before Frankfurter's name was mentioned. After presenting his argument, reiterating

the one given in the 1939 memorandum and what he had just informed Dryfoos (except that FDR was quoted here as “Arthur, I think you are right”), Sulzberger went on to tell Frankfurter: “All this bothers me afresh, because of Secretary Goldberg’s appointment to succeed you,” a reference to which was made in that same day’s editorial in the *Times*. Iphigene Sulzberger vetoed the entire passage, however, with an attached memorandum noting that she remembered Frankfurter had heard of her husband’s “visit to Roosevelt and was very much offended” even though Frankfurter’s name had not yet been mentioned as a possible appointee. With this entire passage dropped from the final letter, Sulzberger observed to Frankfurter that he had “a particular interest in his activities” ever since his help with the Newspaper Guild, and he extended congratulations upon Frankfurter’s Supreme Court service.⁶⁷

On February 22, 1965, Washington’s Birthday, Frankfurter died in the nation’s capital at the age of eighty-two. Frankfurter did not want a rabbi to take part at the simple memorial service, he told the playwright Garson Kanin some months earlier, because he had left the synagogue in the midst of the Yom Kippur service when he was a teenager and never returned. Instead, he chose Professor Louis Henkin of the Columbia Law School, a former clerk and his only close personal friend who also was a practicing Orthodox Jew, to be the last to speak. Why? Explained Frankfurter: “I came into the world a Jew, and although I did not live my life entirely as a Jew, I think it is fitting that I should leave as a Jew.” Henkin decided to read the Hebrew-Aramaic prayer for the dead, the Kaddish.⁶⁸

Counter to Jewish tradition, the body was cremated. Mt. Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, the final resting place of other prominent Bostonians like Longfellow, Story, Dix, Eddy, Lodge, and Holmes, received Frankfurter’s remains from the Washington Cedar Hill Crematory in November. They arrived at their final resting place in columbarium 4, niche E-59, in the Story Chapel. A simple bronze plaque, put up to include his wife after Marion died in 1975 and her ashes were interred alongside, would bear the name of the deceased, together with the years of birth and death.⁶⁹

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Behind lay a rich legacy. Remembering how Frankfurter had penetrated the defenses of Oxford’s self-conscious faculty in 1934, Isaiah Berlin defined his “genius for friendship” as “an unrivalled power of liberation of human beings imprisoned beneath an icy crust of custom or gloom or social terror.”

In an appreciation for the *Harvard Law Review*, Dean Acheson recalled Frankfurter's laugh, his "general noisiness," the depth of his concern about people, "an avidity for good talk," and he concluded that these reflected the "essence of my friend, the loving spirit." Students of constitutional law would debate for years to come Frankfurter's stance on judicial restraint, but no one would dispute the keenness and the vigor of his mind. And, as Chief Justice Earl Warren aptly eulogized the late Associate Justice, his contribution was not in the numbers – 293 opinions, 171 concurrences, and 291 dissents: "While so many others who are born here accept freedom as their birthright and fail to appreciate the necessity of guarding it zealously, he acted always as a sentinel on watch."⁷⁰

Yet behind this very zeal lurked Frankfurter's prolonged anxieties about his Jewish identity. Personal disclaimers notwithstanding, Frankfurter continued to struggle with the pull of his ancestral roots. "A Jew," he told the protesting Lippmann during World War I, "is a man whom non-Jews regard as a Jew." Keenly aware that many viewed him as "the alien," "the Red," "the Jew," this Viennese-born immigrant shifted the loyalties of his Jewish patrimony to an embrace of America, what he characterized to FDR as "my native spiritual home." Among those whom he considered his "greatest benefactors" was his first teacher in P.S. 25 on Fifth Street, for the middle-aged Irish Miss Hogan meted out corporal punishment to anyone who spoke German rather than English. Patricians Holmes (far more than Brandeis) and especially Roosevelt served as "patriarchal authorities," worshipped and adored. He deliberately chose to stand aloof from Jewish affairs once arriving on the highest bench, kept silent during the Holocaust, and (as he admitted in 1953) adopted an "absurdly fastidious" attitude regarding Palestine's future in 1947 even when President Harry S Truman publicly supported the creation of a Jewish state.⁷¹

Hatred of the Jewish people Frankfurter chose to place in a broader context, with Constitution and flag becoming the joined symbols of his American being. At the height of the Holocaust, he asserted this when issuing a rare public tribute to Chaim Weizmann: "Hitler's anti-Semitism is the most obvious and immediate expression not merely of anti-rationalism but of a challenge to the whole blend of forces that constitute the process of modern civilization. In short, Hitler's challenge is against that vast stream of history of which the Greek and Hebrew influences have been the greatest tributaries." (In remarks at Brandeis's funeral, Frankfurter defined the pursuit of reason and love of beauty as "Hellenic", with "Hebraism" reflecting moral law that

goaded to a ceaseless striving for perfection.) While replying in 1960, to an Episcopalian rector's query about continued Jew-hatred, that "authoritative voices" had to speak out "in a collective form" against antisemitism, Frankfurter felt the need to add that "the worst aspect of the McCarthy business was not McCarthy, but the silence of people who did not sympathize with him."⁷² And as much as he insisted that practitioners of the law should be committed to "disinterested inquiry," Frankfurter's ambivalence about himself as a Jew crept into some of his most notable opinions on the Supreme Court. The ambivalence remained unresolved to the end.

Sulzberger's anxieties went even further. Whatever the version of his intercession with Roosevelt over Frankfurter's becoming a member of the Supreme Court – the FDR Library has no record of Sulzberger, Morgenthau Sr., or a Jewish delegation meeting with Roosevelt in 1938 – the publisher of the *New York Times* insisted that the Judaism of his own ancestors could be defined solely in religious terms. He adamantly refused to accept such concepts as Jewish race, Jewish fraternities, Jewish philanthropy, Jewish army, Jewish politics; no Jew on his paper's staff reached what he called "the showcase." While he greatly respected Frankfurter, Sulzberger considered a "Jewish seat" on the Court equally anathema, aside from the distinct possibility of its triggering antisemitism at a time when virulent anti-Jewish sentiment dominated a good part of the Continent and rose in the United States. Universalizing European Jewry's fate before and during its annihilation under German rule, the *Times* obscured that people's unique tragedy in the years of the Holocaust. Its news coverage and editorials reflected Sulzberger's uncompromising anti-Zionism, the publisher to accept the reborn State of Israel only *de facto*.⁷³

Given Sulzberger's perspective, the *New York Times*'s response to the passing of Frankfurter is understandable. Extolling the man "whose wit and charm and intelligence enlivened so many dinner conversations, and who had so exemplified 'the unbought grace of life,'" a lengthy obituary made one reference to the late justice's origins. His imprint on American life, the newspaper observed, was "the more remarkable because he was an immigrant and a Jew who rose to eminence in a day when neither anti-Semitism nor suspicion of the foreign-born was a rarity." An editorial the next day, refusing to arbitrate the dispute over judicial activism or restraint regarding the Court's function, observed that he was "admirably brilliant, honest and unsparing in his contribution to the public dialogue." Its one acknowledgment of Frankfurter the Jew read thus: "He had a Jewish love of learning for its own sake as befit

the descendant of six generations of rabbis and Talmudic scholars." And the tribute closed: "As a philosopher and scholar of the law; a judicial craftsman; a master of prose style and a formative influence on a generation of American lawyers and public officials, Felix Frankfurter was a major shaper of the history of his age."⁷⁴

Without doubt, the highest placed Jew in American life since Brandeis's retirement in February, 1939, merited such an encomium. Following a brilliant legal career, he had realized his life's dream when the man whom he venerated close to the point of sycophancy appointed him to the highest court in the land. Two days before his death, Frankfurter gave last instructions to his biographer, speaking slowly and gravely: "Let people see how much I loved Roosevelt, how much I loved my country, and let them see how great a man Roosevelt was."⁷⁵

Behind this heartfelt conviction, however, also rested the meaning of Frankfurter's response to his dual identity, as well as his silence on Jewish concerns once a member of the Supreme Court. With good reason, he could not forgive Sulzberger and others of the publisher's circle for being prepared to grant second-rate citizenship to the country's Jews. Like Brandeis and Mack, he wished to be accepted on merit like any American. Accepting the award of the National Institute for Immigrant Welfare a few months after joining the Court, Frankfurter quoted approvingly the words of Italian scholar and immigrant G. A. Borgese, who had expressed eternal gratitude to the United States for bestowing "the remarkable privilege of creating a new life." Yet in the process of forging such a life in his adopted country, Frankfurter's fervent patriotism and total devotion to Roosevelt put in question the claims of his Jewish heritage. The historian Barbara W. Tuchman, writing of Morgenthau Sr., her maternal grandfather, later termed this conflict "the assimilationist dilemma."⁷⁶ For Felix Frankfurter, the dilemma had brought much promise and reward, but with the pursuit and triumph came additional consequences. A price was paid.

Notes

- 1 *Felix Frankfurter Reminiscences*, Harlan Phillips, ed. (New York, 1960) pp. 328, 334; H. N. Hirsch, *The Enigma of Felix Frankfurter* (New York, 1981), p. 125; *Roosevelt and Frankfurter, Their Correspondence, 1928-1945*, Max Freedman, ed. (Boston, 1967), p. 483.
- 2 Richard Polenberg, *The World of Benjamin Cardozo, Personal Values and the Judicial Process* (Cambridge, 1997); Felix Frankfurter, "Cardozo, Benjamin Nathan," *Dictionary of American Biography*, supplement 2, R.I. Schuyler and E.T. James, eds. (New York, 1958), p. 95.
- 3 Harold Ickes, *The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes*, Vol. 2: *The Inside Struggle, 1936-1939* (New York, 1954), pp. 423-424; William E. Leuchtenburg, *The Supreme Court Reborn, The Constitutional Revolution in the Age of Roosevelt* (New York, 1995).
- 4 Ickes, *Secret Diary*, p. 424.
- 5 Joseph Lash, "A Brahmin of the Law: A Biographical Essay," in *From the Diaries of Felix Frankfurter*, J. Lash, ed. (New York, 1975), pp. 3-24, 36-39, 43; *Holmes-Laski Letters, The Correspondence of Oliver Wendell Holmes and Harold J. Laski*, Mark Wolfe Howe, ed., 2 (London, 1953), pp. 1393-1397, 1399. For Stimson's appreciation of Frankfurter, see Stimson to Mack, Apr. 6, 1914, A405/231, Central Zionist Archives (hereafter CZA), Jerusalem.
- 6 *Roosevelt and Frankfurter*, pp. 73-109.
- 7 *Roosevelt and Frankfurter*, pp. 110-113, 124.
- 8 *Roosevelt and Frankfurter*, pp. 112, 126; Baker, *Brandeis and Frankfurter*, pp. 159-181; *Felix Frankfurter Reminiscences*, pp. 338, 155-156; Lash, "A Brahmin of the Law," pp. 25-26. Feisal added, in the letter composed by T. E. Lawrence, that the Arab-Jewish agreement depended on the British carrying out their wartime promises to the Arabs. Frankfurter to Israel's ambassador, Jan. 11, 1965, A264/50, CZA.
- 9 Jerold S. Auerbach, *Rabbis and Lawyers, The Journey from Torah to Constitution* (Bloomington, 1990), pp. 154-159; Harry Barnard, *The Forging of an American Jew, The Life and Times of Judge Julian W. Mack* (New York, 1974), pp. 291-300; Jerome Karabel, *The Chosen* (Boston, 2005), pp. 86-109; Felix Frankfurter, "The Palestine Situation Restated," *Foreign Affairs* 9 (Apr. 1931), 409-434. The Zionist Organization of America, which provided Frankfurter with documentation, distributed the article widely. His draft of a message for FDR to that organization one year later hailed "the Jewish homeland", promised in the Balfour Declaration, as "a new glory of Israel" whose development also promoted Arab well-being. Frankfurter to Rothenberg, Oct. 7, 1932, F38/1308, CZA. Five years later, Frankfurter informed the wife of an anti-Zionist colleague at Harvard that this essay "expresses the only views on the Palestine situation which I have ever entertained or ever expressed. They are still my views; and for me events have only reinforced them." Frankfurter to Agnes Hocking, Oct. 5, 1936, A264/47, CZA. In January 1938, he turned down a request from the editor of *Foreign Affairs* to write an article on the future of Zionism, claiming it "most probable" that he would have a share in discussions with the British government on the Palestine "imbroglio." Frankfurter to Armstrong, Jan. 10, 1938, Box 29, Hamilton Fish Armstrong MSS., Sterling Library, Princeton University.

- 10 *Roosevelt and Frankfurter*, p. 211; *Holmes and Frankfurter, Their Correspondence, 1912-1934*, R.M. Mennel and C.L. Compston, eds. (Hanover, 1996), p. 276; Frankfurter to Stimson, Apr. 15, 1934, Henry Stimson MSS., Sterling Library, Yale University, New Haven; Felix Frankfurter, "Notes on Palestine," June 8, 1934; addendum to report, June 8, 1934; both in Box 162, Felix Frankfurter MSS., Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Also see Frankfurter to Brodie, Apr. 11, 1934, A225/274, CZA.
- 11 De Haas to Mack, June 19, 1934; Tulin to Mack, July 6, 1934; both in Box 89, Robert Szold MSS., Zionist Archives (ZA), New York; "Comments on F.F.'s Memorandum on Palestine," file 102, Julian W. Mack MSS., ZA. (All the ZA files were later transferred to the CZA.) It appears that the lawyer Samuel J. Rosensohn authored this critique. There is a related letter in this same file by Rosensohn to Mack, July 6, 1934, with an undated, handwritten reply by Frankfurter which Mack sent to Rosensohn, July 16, 1934. For the transcript of a conversation on March 15, 1935, between Frankfurter and the Revisionist Zionist leader Vladimir Jabotinsky, see *Jewish Observer and Middle East Review*, Nov. 4, 1968, pp. 12-13, 15. For the Revisionist-Labor conflict, see chaps. 8-9.
- 12 Frankfurter to Hull, May 23, 1933, Box 137, Felix Frankfurter MSS.; *Roosevelt and Frankfurter*, pp. 164, 173-174.
- 13 Frankfurter to Billikopf, Jan. 8, 1935, Box 4, Frankfurter MSS.; Frankfurter to Coffin, Jan. 21, 1936, file 1196, Oscar G. Villard MSS., Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts; Frankfurter to Clark, Mar. 3 and 20, 1936, microfilm no. 25, Louis D. Brandeis MSS., University of Louisville, Louisville, Kentucky; Stephen H. Norwood, "Legitimizing Nazism: Harvard University and the Hitler Regime, 1933-1937," *American Jewish History* 92 (June 2004), 189-223.
- 14 Frankfurter to Villard, Feb. 24, 1936, file 1196, Villard MSS.
- 15 Baker, *Brandeis and Frankfurter*, pp. 297-300. For Jew-hatred in the 1930s and its increase during World War II, see Leonard Dinnerstein, *Anti-Semitism in America* (New York, 1994), chaps. 6-7.
- 16 Lash, "A Brahmin of the Law," pp. 48-49, 55-59. For Lippmann's anxieties regarding his own Jewish identity and his break with Frankfurter, see Ronald Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century* (Boston, 1980), pp. 186-196, 329-333, 372-374.
- 17 William E. Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal* (New York, 1963), pp. 195, 231-235; *Roosevelt and Frankfurter*, pp. 380-404; Baker, *Brandeis and Frankfurter*, pp. 323-336; Frankfurter to Mack, May 25, 1937, A405/231, CZA; Lash, "A Brahmin of the Law," pp. 61-62.
- 18 *Roosevelt and Frankfurter*, pp. 403-407; Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal*, pp. 238-268.
- 19 Baker, *Brandeis and Frankfurter*, pp. 356, 342-352; "Half Brother, Half Son," *The Letters of Louis D. Brandeis to Felix Frankfurter*, M. I. Urofsky and D. Levy, eds. (Norman, 1991), pp. 519-520, 533-534; *Roosevelt and Frankfurter*, pp. 475-476. For the State Department's anxiety about a speech by Ickes in March 1938, that criticized both Nazism and Fascism, see Ickes, *Secret Diary*, pp. 347-352.
- 20 Mar. 22, 1938, Vol. 115, Henry Morgenthau Jr. Diaries, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library (FDRL), Hyde Park, N.Y.; Frankfurter to McDonald, July 1, 1938 (two letters), James McDonald MSS., School for International Affairs, Columbia University, New

- York. For the Evian Conference on Refugees, see A.J. Sherman, *Island Refuge: Britian and Refugees from the Third Reich, 1933-1939* (London, 1973), pp. 112-136.
- 21 *New York Times*, Aug. 9, 1938; Baker, *Brandeis and Frankfurter*, p. 360; *New York Times*, Sept. 23, 1938.
 - 22 Baker, *Brandeis and Frankfurter*, p. 359; Helen S. Thomas, *Felix Frankfurter: Scholar on the Bench* (Baltimore, 1960), pp. 33-34.
 - 23 Michael Parrish, *Felix Frankfurter and His Times, The Reform Years* (New York, 1982), p. 274; Baker, *Brandeis and Frankfurter*, p. 360.
 - 24 Ickes, *Secret Diary*, pp. 470-471. Wise had heard of Jewish opposition to Frankfurter's appointment to the Supreme Court some time earlier. See *Stephen S. Wise, Servant of the People*, C.H. Voss, ed. (Phila. 1969), pp. 229-230.
 - 25 "Anti-Semitism is Here," *Nation* 147 (Aug. 20, 1938), 167-168. For Cohen's achievement, see William Lasser, *Benjamin V. Cohen, Architect of the New Deal* (New Haven, 2004).
 - 26 Mack to Roosevelt, Oct. 6, 1938, President's Personal Files (PPF) 2211, FDRL. Privately, Mack admitted to Frankfurter his own "real lack of religious feeling and belief." Mack to Frankfurter, Mar. 31, 1930. A405/231, CZA.
 - 27 Roosevelt to Mack, Oct. 19, 1938, PPF 2211, FDRL.
 - 28 Frankfurter acceptance of American Bar Association Medal, August 15, 1963, in *Felix Frankfurter, A Tribute*, W. Mendelson, ed. (New York, 1964), p. 7; *Felix Frankfurter Reminisces*, pp. 325-327; *FDR, His Personal Letters, 1928-1945*, 2 (New York, 1950), pp. 817-818; *Time*, Oct. 17, 1938.
 - 29 Szold to Brandeis, Oct. 13, 1938, file 135, Szold MSS.; *Roosevelt and Frankfurter*, p. 463. A few years earlier, in private talks with two high-ranking British officials, Frankfurter had made an identical plea against what he called "arresting the progress" of the Zionists' "great achievement." Memorandum of Frankfurter interview with Cunliffe-Lister, June 28, 1934, A264/19; Note of Frankfurter-Halifax conversation, July 28, 1936, A264/57; both in CZA.
 - 30 Official Files (OF), Palestine, Box 1, FDRL; Lehman to Roosevelt, Oct. 10, 1938, PPF 93, FDRL; Wise to Frankfurter, Oct. 16, 1938, Box 109, Stephen Wise MSS., American Jewish Historical Society, Waltham, Mass. (transferred to the Center for Jewish History, New York City); *Half Brother, Half Son*, p. 620.
 - 31 Billikopf to Frankfurter, Nov. 2, 1938, Jacob Billikopf MSS., file 8/2, American Jewish Archives (AJA), Cincinnati. Of the wealthy American Jews at the time, only Morgenthau, Jacob Schiff, and Nathan Straus had supported Brandeis's appointment to the Court. Baker, *Brandeis and Frankfurter*, pp. 101, 116-117.
 - 32 Billikopf to Sulzberger, Nov. 4, 1938, file 29/2, Billikopf MSS.
 - 33 Sulzberger to Billikopf, Jan. 5, 1939, file 29/2, Billikopf MSS.; Sulzberger to Rothschild, May 10, 1939, Jew and Judaism files, Arthur Hays Sulzberger Archives (hereafter SA), New York Times Archives, New York; Susan Tifft and Alex S. Jones, *The Trust: The Private and Powerful Family Behind the New York Times* (Boston, 1999), p. 216; newspaper clippings, July 22, 1938, Palestine files, SA; Sulzberger to Railey, Apr. 2 and 25, 1933, German files, SA; Sulzberger to Morgenthau, July 12, 1938, vol. 134, Morgenthau Diaries; *New York Times*, July 31, 1938.

- 34 1930 draft on Palestine, Jews and Judaism files, SA; Sulzberger to Straus, Apr. 15, 1933; Sulzberger Feb, 1937, statement; both in Palestine and Zionism files, SA; Sulzberger to Goldman, Apr. 23, 1937, file 6/15, Ralph Goldman MSS., AJA.
- 35 Sulzberger to Montor, Aug. 26, 1937; Sulzberger to Strauss, Apr. 15, 1933; both in Palestine and Zionism files, SA; "*Half Brother, Half Son*," p. 612. The German prayer translates as "If God will simply preserve our health." Frankfurter repeated this characterization two weeks later in writing to Herbert Feis, a Jew who then served as Economic Advisor to the State Department. Frankfurter to Feis, Apr. 26, 1938, Box 16, Herbert Feis MSS., Library of Congress. An earlier confession that he had "long crossed off" what he termed these "rich German Jews" is in Frankfurter to Wise, Oct. 30, 1936, Box 109, Wise MSS. For Baruch's conflicted stance on his Jewish identity, see Jordan A. Schwartz, *The Speculator: Bernard M. Baruch in Washington, 1917-1965* (Chapel Hill, 1981), pp. 559-566.
- 36 Barbara W. Tuchman, "The Assimilationist Dilemma: Ambassador Morgenthau's Story," *Commentary* 63 (May 1977), 58-62; Baker, *Brandeis and Frankfurter*, pp. 165-167; Henry Morgenthau, "Zionism: A Surrender, Not A Solution," *World's Work* 42 (July 1921), 1-8 (supplement); Arthur Rupp, *Memoirs, Diaries, Letters*, K. Gershon, trans. (London, 1971), pp. 201-202; Nov. 26, 1941, Morgenthau presidential diaries, FDRL. For Frankfurter's caustic linking of Morgenthau and Baruch, see Frankfurter to Wyzanski, Apr. 18, 1938, Box 43, Frankfurter MSS.
- 37 Sulzberger to Frankfurter, Aug. 30, 1962, Frankfurter file, SA; *From Iphigene*, p. 178; Sulzberger to Mahlberg, Dec. 14, 1935, Frankfurter file, SA; *New York Times*, November, 1937. Frankfurter dashed off his letter of November 1937, after talking with Sulzberger about the need to respond to a communication, published in the *Times* on November 16, which compared the Mufti to George Washington and called for his return to Palestine. The letter had been written by Pierre Crabites, a law professor at the University of Louisiana, who had for twenty-five years been the U.S. representative on the Mixed International Tribunal at Cairo, of which he became chief judge. Frankfurter to Sulzberger, Nov. 26, 1937, Brandeis MSS., microfilm no. 26. Subsequently, he assured Crabites that he fully shared the latter's objective – "honorable peace in Palestine and effective collaboration between Arabs and Jews." This, he noted, had been the governing direction that his views on Zionism had had since the beginning, and he had so expressed them, by word of mouth and in writing, to Feisal. Frankfurter to Crabites, Dec. 10, 1937, A264/47, CZA.
- 38 Sulzberger to Frankfurter, Feb. 1, 1938, Frankfurter file, SA; "*Half Brother, Half Son*," pp. 612-613.
- 39 Rita Thalman and Emmanuel Feinermann, *Crystal Night*, G. Cremonesi, trans. (London 1974); Diary, Nov. 13-14, 1938, Box 99, Armstrong MSS.; Frankfurter to Billikopf, Nov. 15, 1938; Frankfurter to Billikopf, Nov. 30, 1938; both in file 8/2, Billikopf MSS.
- 40 "*Half Brother, Half Son*," p. 321; Baker, *Brandeis and Frankfurter*, p. 361.
- 41 *New York Times*, Nov. 17, 1938; Brandeis to Szold, Nov. 11, 1938, A251/329b, CZA; "*Half Brother, Half Son*," pp. 622-623; Baker, *Brandeis and Frankfurter*, pp. 354-355.
- 42 Roosevelt to Taylor, Nov. 23, 1938, Myron Taylor MSS., FDRL; Roosevelt to

- Bowman, Oct. 14, 1938; Roosevelt to Bowman, Nov. 2, 1938; both in Roosevelt file, Isaiah Bowman MSS., Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore; Nov. 16, 1938, vol. 151, Morgenthau Diaries; Rosenman memorandum to Roosevelt, Dec. 5, 1938, PPF 64, FDRL; *New York Times*, Nov. 16, 1938; Walter Lippmann, "Today and Tomorrow: The Problem of the Refugees," *New York Herald Tribune*, Nov. 17, 1938; *Time*, Dec. 5, 1938.
- 43 *Roosevelt and Frankfurter*, p. 466; Frankfurter to Zinder, Dec. 23, 1937, A264/47, CZA; Brandeis to Szold, Nov. 24, 1938, A251/329b, CZA.
 - 44 Ickes, *Secret Diary*, pp. 509-510.
 - 45 Jim Farley, *Jim Farley's Story: The Roosevelt Years* (New York, 1948), pp. 161-162; Ickes, *Secret Diary*, p. 539.
 - 46 Parrish, *Felix Frankfurter*, pp. 275-277.
 - 47 *Roosevelt and Frankfurter*, pp. 466-472; Baker, *Brandeis and Frankfurter*, p. 361.
 - 48 Memorandum of meetings, Dec. 22-23, 1938, A264/48, CZA. Unlike the Committee, Frankfurter thought that specific antisemitic attacks should not be ignored, just as "our traditional, democratic faith" had to be "rigorously, persistently and uncompromisingly pursued both in word and deed." Frankfurter to Proskauer, Nov. 30, 1938, Box 31, Frankfurter MSS. For the work of the Survey Committee, which had drawn up this report, see Naomi Cohen, *Not Free to Desist, The American Jewish Committee, 1906-1966* (Philadelphia, 1972), pp. 200-202. For a second (and last) meeting on this topic, convened by Frankfurter, see memorandum of discussion, Apr. 10, 1939, Series I, 3/119, Max Lerner MSS., Sterling Library, Yale University.
 - 49 *Roosevelt and Frankfurter*, pp. 470-472; *Felix Frankfurter Reminiscences*, p. 327. FDR would appoint Rutledge to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit in 1939, where the judge demonstrated strong liberal tendencies, especially in his interpretation of the due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. Rutledge went on to serve on the Supreme Court from 1943 until his death in 1949 at the age of fifty-five.
 - 50 Ickes, *Secret Diary*, pp. 539-540, 545-546, 551.
 - 51 Ickes, *Secret Diary*, pp. 552, 559.
 - 52 Sulzberger to Frankfurter, Jan. 5, 1939, Frankfurter file, SA; *New York Times*, Jan. 6, 1939; Frankfurter to Sulzberger, Jan. 9, 1939, Frankfurter file, SA. Having heard Sulzberger's version from Billikopf, Cohen replied at the month's end: "He was anti. I imagine that Sulzberger must regret that he ever raised the question, and I think it's much better to forget all about it." Cohen to Billikopf, Jan. 25, 1939, Cohen file, Billikopf MSS.
 - 53 *Brandeis and Frankfurter*, p. 362; David Ben-Gurion, *Zikhronot*, 6 (Tel Aviv, 1987), p. 74. For Lowell's "underlying bigotry," see Stephen Steinberg, *The Melting Pot* (New York, 1974), pp. 73-78.
 - 54 *Felix Frankfurter Reminiscences*, pp. 333-334.
 - 55 Baker, *Brandeis and Frankfurter*, pp. 364-365; Wise to Roosevelt, Jan. 5, 1939, Box 68, Wise MSS.; Myron I. Skolnick, *The New Deal and Anti-Semitism in America* (New York, 1990), p. 234n52; *The German White Paper*, C. Hartley Grattan, ed. (New York, 1940), pp. 29-31. Subsequently, Wise wrote to Cohen: "Only Roosevelt would have

- dared to do it; and the Great Chief will have the glory through decades of the great service which Felix is sure to render." Wise to Cohen, Jan. 27, 1939, Wise MSS.
- 56 Adler address to the annual meeting, Jan. 29, 1939, Chronos file, American Jewish Committee Archives, New York; Alpheus T. Mason, *Harlan Fiske Stone* (New York, 1956), pp. 354, 482; Baker, *Brandeis and Frankfurter*, p. 363.
- 57 *Felix Frankfurter Reminiscences*, pp. 330-332; Baker, *Brandeis and Frankfurter*, pp. 366-367; Ickes, *Secret Diary*, p. 563.
- 58 Hirsch, *The Enigma of Felix Frankfurter*, p. 126; *Roosevelt and Frankfurter*, pp. 485-486.
- 59 *Millersville School District v. Gobitis*, 310 U.S. 586; *West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette*, 319 U.S., 624; *From the Diaries of Felix Frankfurter*, pp. 253-254.
- 60 *Schneiderman v. U.S.*, 329 U.S. 118; *From the Diaries of Felix Frankfurter*, pp. 211-213. Earlier, Frankfurter had shared the letter from Gaetano Salvemini with FDR. *Roosevelt and Frankfurter*, pp. 565-566.
- 61 Auerbach, *Rabbis and Lawyers*, p. 164; *Roosevelt and Frankfurter*, *passim*; Shabtai Teveth, *Ben-Gurion, The Burning Ground, 1886-1948* (Boston, 1987), pp. 692-693, 775; Frankfurter to Silver, Apr. 14, 1943, A264/49, CZA; *From the Diaries of Felix Frankfurter*, pp. 345-50. Frankfurter's assurance to Silver echoed what he had said one month earlier to Rabbi Meir Berlin (later Bar-Ilan), head of the Mizrahi religious-Zionist party: While his "judicial office precluded" becoming the "formal spokesman for Palestine when the time comes," "he and everyone else knew not only where my sympathies were but where my convictions were regarding the relation of carrying out the policy of Balfour and Wilson and the two governments that are primarily committed to the Balfour Declaration after this holocaust (*sic*) is over." *From the Diaries of Felix Frankfurter*, p. 200.
- 62 Paul A. Freund, "Frankfurter, Felix," *Dictionary of American Biography*, supplement 7, 1961-1965, J.A. Garraty, ed. (New York, 1981), p. 264; James F. Simon, *The Antagonists: Hugo Black, Felix Frankfurter and Civil Liberties in Modern America* (New York, 1989); Lash, "A Brahmin of the Law," pp. 68-87.
- 63 Baker, *Brandeis and Frankfurter*, pp. 483-485, 489-490; *New York Times*, Aug. 30, 1962.
- 64 *New York Times*, Aug. 30, 1962.
- 65 Sulzberger statement, Dec. 15, 1959, Jews and Judaism files, SA; Sulzberger to Dreyfoos, Aug. 29, 1962, Frankfurter file, SA.
- 66 The memorandum's reference to Sulzberger's talk with FDR about Frankfurter's appointment was first cited in Laura Leff, "A 'tragic fight' in the Family: *The New York Times*, Reform Judaism and the Holocaust," *American Jewish History*, 88 (Mar. 2000), p. 18n. The full memorandum, dated December 28, 1939, is in Roosevelt files, SA.
- 67 Sulzberger to Frankfurter, Aug. 30, 1962; memorandum, Aug. 30, 1962; both in Frankfurter file, SA.
- 68 Garson Kanin, in *Felix Frankfurter, A Tribute*, pp. 57-58; *Felix Frankfurter Reminiscences*, pp. 337-338; Ari L. Goldman, *Living A Year of Kaddish, A Memoir* (New York, 2003), p. 122.
- 69 Loughlin to Penkower, Oct. 5, 2006.
- 70 Isaiah Berlin, *Personal Impressions*, H. Hardy, ed. (New York, 1990), pp. 83-90; *New York Times*, Feb. 23, 1965; Baker, *Brandeis and Frankfurter*, p. 491.

- 71 Jordan, *The Speculator*, p. 560; *Roosevelt and Frankfurter*, p. 511; Robert A. Burt, *Two Jewish Justices, Outcasts in the Promised Land* (Berkeley, 1988), p. 39; Auerbach, *Rabbis and Lawyers*, p. 164; *From the Diaries of Felix Frankfurter*, p. 346.
- 72 Felix Frankfurter, "Foreward," in M.W. Weisgal, ed. *Chaim Weizmann* (New York, 1944), pp. 7-9; Frankfurter remarks, Oct. 7, 1941, PPF 140, FDRL; Frankfurter to Miller, Jan. 20, 1960, A264/50, CZA. In the first half of the 1950s, Republican Senator Joseph R. McCarthy of Wisconsin conducted highly questionable investigations of alleged Communists and subversives, including charges that he leveled against members of the State Department and U.S. Army personnel. In December, 1954, the Senate voted to "condemn" him; this official reprimand and the Democrats' regaining control of Congress led to a diminishing of his influence until McCarthy's death three years later.
- 73 Hanson to Penkower, Oct. 16, 2006; Laurel Leff, *Buried by the Times: The Holocaust and America's Most Important Newspaper* (Cambridge, 2005); *New York Times*, Nov. 30, 1947; Sulzberger to Pratt, n.d., attached to Feb., 1959, Israel files, SA; Sulzberger draft, Dec. 15, 1959, Jews and Judaism file, SA.
- 74 *New York Times*, Feb. 23 and 24, 1965.
- 75 *Roosevelt and Frankfurter*, p. 744.
- 76 Frankfurter address, May 11, 1939, RG 13, file 8/2, AJA; Tuchman, "The Assimilationist Dilemma: *Commentary* 63 (May, 1977), 58-62. To Ben-Gurion, this explained Frankfurter's "great caution – almost his cowardice" on Jewish concerns, as opposed to his "courage" regarding general matters, such as the Sacco-Vanzetti case. Ben-Gurion, *Zikbronot*, p. 94.

The Genesis of the American Council for Judaism

IT ALL BEGAN ON THE NBC RADIO AIRWAVES, THREE MONTHS AFTER Hitler's *Wehrmacht* invaded Poland. On December 2, 1939, speaking via a national hook-up under the auspices of the "Message of Israel Hour," Rabbi Morris S. Lazaron decried the first projected visit of Chaim Weizmann to American shores since the outbreak of World War II. According to Lazaron, while U.S. Jewry was prepared to help send to Palestine as many co-religionist refugees from Europe "as conditions permit," the "most unfortunate" visit of the president of the World Zionist Organization (WZO) and the Jewish Agency for Palestine "is bound to have political implications with which I believe the majority of American Jews do not wish to have any concern."

Rather than becoming involved in the pressure of international politics as Jews, the fifty-one-year-old Reform leader of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation went on to say, we have no political interests save those shared with the rest of our fellow citizens "to safeguard the integrity and freedom of the nation and to maintain the American way." Confronted by the brutalizing Communist and Fascist nationalisms of the time, American Jews were called upon to champion the message of prophetic Judaism, "a universal religion which knows no land or people or race." The future, Lazaron averred, lay with "the invincible dream of man – one humanity on earth as there is one God in heaven."¹

The Savannah-born clergyman had oscillated considerably regarding his people's renaissance in the biblically covenanted Promised Land, placed under a British Mandate by the League of Nations in 1922. Two years after receiving ordination from the Hebrew Union College (HUC) in 1914, Lazaron informed the Federation of American Zionists that he eschewed political Zionism in favor of encouraging settlement in Palestine and furthering Jewish life there. During the next two decades, however, he enthusiastically labored for the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA) and the WZO's financial arm, Keren HaYesod, accepted election to the ZOA national committee "with pleasure," and even defended Weizmann against criticism from American Zionist tribune Stephen Wise. He strenuously objected, at the same time, to Zionist endorsement in 1935 of a proposed World Jewish Congress, as well as to reducing the number of non-Zionists

on the Jewish Agency executive from parity to an 8:2 ratio.

“Pushed by the logic of things,” including a conviction that Jewish nationalism made Arab-Jewish agreement difficult, Lazaron opposed the support of his brother-in-law, Abba Hillel Silver, and the Zionist Congress for Great Britain’s 1937 offer of partitioning Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state. On May 18, 1939, one day after His Majesty’s Government (HMG) reneged on its 1917 Balfour Declaration by curtailing Jewish immigration to 75,000 over a five-year period — thereafter with Arab consent — and declaring its objective to establish “an independent Palestine state” within ten years, Lazaron resigned from the ZOA.²

His anxieties about political Zionism mounted in the first months of the war. Reports that the American Jewish Congress under Wise advocated a unified Jewish Agency sparked a warning to philanthropist Paul Baerwald, like-minded chairman of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC): “Those of us who will not be swamped by transplanted Ghettoism must be firm and must carry the educational campaign to their camp.” There should be an aggressive campaign for “Americanization” among Jews, urged the veteran Jewish spokesman for the National Conference of Jews and Christians. Since Weizmann’s visit was probably intended to encourage American Jews to press HMG regarding Palestine, serious worries arose in light of both Washington’s “delicately poised neutrality” and the impact on the country’s Jews. In addition, his visit was embarrassing to an administration that “again and again” had emphasized its understanding of and “friendly cooperation” regarding European Jewry’s tragic situation. While Baerwald proceeded at the JDC’s twenty-fifth anniversary meeting to praise President Franklin D. Roosevelt (“one high-minded person of great importance”) for convening the 1938 Evian Conference on Refugees, Lazaron felt compelled to inform Silver of a personal, deep concern that Weizmann’s coming could only have a “harmful” effect.³

His radio address a few days later shocked the American Zionist camp, which responded without delay. “An unpardonable breach of the amenities” thundered the *New Palestine* in an editorial titled “needless provocation”; the ZOA magazine noted American Jewry’s clear support of the Balfour Declaration, the United Palestine Appeal (UPA) and the expanded Jewish Agency, and its “unquestioned” special interest in the plight of Europe’s Jews. Privately, ZOA president Rabbi Solomon Goldman took Lazaron’s daring speech, motivated by the pleas from “other bodies in competition with us,” as a sign that the “unexpressed resistance” to Zionism was currently far greater

in the United States than ever in memory. Hundreds of protesting telegrams from Zionists and non-Zionists reached Rabbi Jonah B. Wise, director of the "Message of Israel Hour," who had been caught unawares by the broadcast. Having invited Weizmann in August to the one community which had any resources to support the upbuilding of Palestine, UPA chairman Silver found it "quite impossible" to accept his brother-in-law's invitation to speak at the festivities marking the latter's silver anniversary with the Baltimore congregation. Their break was complete.⁴

Delegates to the JDC annual meeting reacted to Lazon's disparagement of the impending Weizmann visit with "widespread indignation," but the broadcast threatened to cancel the chief Zionist's scheduled participation at the Council's of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds assembly the next month. Some within the council's program committee, spearheaded by Solomon Lowenstein and William Shroder, argued that the appearance of "a political and controversial figure" such as Weizmann would precipitate violent controversy. UPA executive director Henry Montor's lengthy rebuttal, backed by B'nai B'rith president Henry Monsky and Isidore Sobeloff, eventually carried the day. Apparently, Montor informed Silver, certain quarters especially in New York had thoroughly discussed the subject of Weizmann's visit, and "a barrage has been let loose." The Zionist movement had to guard against any repetition of that "disgraceful discussion," he concluded, particularly in view of the entire attitude that might be adopted by "a certain fanatic group in the United States" to Weizmann's presence.⁵

These suspicions had merit, for some in the top ranks of the established American Jewish Committee (AJC) rallied to Lazon's standard. At a luncheon meeting in mid-December instigated by Edward Greenbaum, Joseph Willen and Dick Rothschild particularly embraced an all-out assault on Zionism. Executive secretary Morris Waldman adamantly objected to branding a large part of American Jewry with lack of patriotism, however, and took note of the committee's formal endorsement of the Balfour Declaration and HMG's Palestine Mandate, as well as the lead taken by late AJC president Louis Marshall in having non-Zionists join the enlarged Agency in 1929.

Executive chairman Sol Stroock agreed wholeheartedly with Waldman's insistence that official AJC support of the Baltimore rabbi, whose draft public statement Waldman incisively took apart, would create "the most serious cleavage within our community." With Stroock's blessing, Waldman paid a visit to the State Department. There he heard from George Messersmith that

Weizmann's visit was not regarded as a problem to an administration that would not lend itself at this time to any pressure on England with respect to Palestine. Former Supreme Court Justice Louis Dembitz Brandeis concurred with this assessment.⁶

The country's more successfully assimilated Jews had long embraced Lazon's general thesis. Under new owner Adolph Ochs, the *New York Times* sneered in 1897 that Theodor Herzl's proposal to buy Palestine from the Turkish authorities had "the flavor of the Stock Exchange"; Israel's mission, the newspaper editorialized in its review of the Zionist founder's *Der Judenstaat*, "is no longer political but purely and simply religious." Immediately following the first World Zionist Congress, Ochs's father-in-law, Reform chief Isaac Mayer Wise, was tapped to write a lengthy article entitled "A Jewish State Impossible."

Further, leading financier and philanthropist Jacob Schiff insisted that agitation for a Jewish commonwealth "is apt to retard the Americanization of thousands who, in recent years, have come among us, and whose success and happiness depend upon the readiness with which the newcomers shall be able in their civic condition – as separate from their faith – to become absorbed into the American people." U.S. ambassador Henry Morgenthau, Sr., agreed: "We Jews of America have found America to be our Zion. Therefore I refuse to allow myself to be called a Zionist. I am an American." Brandeis's appeal that Zionism could be combined with Americanism struck the country's most influential columnist, Walter Lippmann, as "other-worldiness of a peculiarly dangerous sort," resting as it did on the belief that "the extra-Palestinian Jew is to keep his body in one place and to attach his mind somewhere else."⁷

The 1885 Pittsburgh Platform, authored by Kaufmann Kohler, first enunciated such sentiments in unequivocal fashion. Chaired by Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise, the Reform conference in the Steel City formulated a series of principles which, like Reform assemblies in Germany some decades earlier, espoused an anti-Zionist doctrine. Defining Judaism as a "progressive religion" that ever strove to be in accord with "the postulates of reason," and confident that the modern era was approaching "the realization of Israel's great messianic hope for the establishment of the kingdom of truth, justice and peace among all men," those present declared: "We consider ourselves no longer a nation, but a religious community, and therefore expect neither a return to Palestine, nor a sacrificial worship under the sons of Aaron, nor the restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish state."

The (Reform) Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) adopted

this platform at its founding four years later. Although a few prominent CCAR members like Bernhard Felsenthal, Gustav Gottheil, Max Heller, and Stephen Wise were Zionists, the Pittsburgh Platform remained the major statement of Reform Judaism's fundamental tenets (accepted also by the lay Union of American Hebrew Congregations – UAHC) until its extensive revision a half century later.⁸

Reform's collective posture on Eretz Israel began shifting after the issuance of the Balfour Declaration, but official revision of the Pittsburgh Platform only came with the CCAR conference in 1937. Two years earlier that body had resolved to leave Zionism up to the members' individual choice, even as it pledged to continue to cooperate in Palestine's development "and in the economic, cultural, and particular spiritual tasks confronting the growing and evolving Jewish community there." The Columbus Platform of 1937, drafted by HUC theology professor Samuel S. Cohon, went much further in endorsing the concept of Jewish peoplehood and in stating that it was "the obligation of all Jewry" to aid in Palestine's upbuilding "as a Jewish homeland by endeavoring to make it not only a haven of refuge for the oppressed but also a center of Jewish cultural and spiritual life." Not only were Herzl and Ahad Ha'am, his classic opponent, joined thereby; the universal mission and the particularist strands of Judaism, as Cohon taught to students increasingly stirred by the Nazi menace and concurrent Zionist achievement and as Silver had advocated at the earlier 1935 assembly, were now officially reconciled.⁹

Lazaron joined Reform rabbinical colleagues James Heller and Samuel Gup in proposing a similar resolution to the UAHC biennial council that same year. Expressing satisfaction with the progress made by the Jewish Agency in Palestine's impressive growth, it averred that "the hand of Providence" was manifest in the opening up of that country's gates just when a large part of Jewry "is so desperately in need of a friendly shelter and a home where a spiritual, cultural center may be developed in accordance with Jewish ideals." All Jews were urged to unite in giving their financial and moral support to this endeavor. In unanimous agreement, the relevant committee next moved its adoption. Jonah Wise seconded the motion, which carried without discussion or a recorded vote. Shortly thereafter, lawyer Robert Goldman of Cincinnati became the first active Zionist to head the UAHC.¹⁰

Pro-Palestine but anti-political Zionist, Lazaron ultimately set down his convictions at length in early 1940. Adumbrating the basic argument of his NBC radio address, *Homeland or State: The Real Issue* charged that a Jewish state or Jewish international political action would aggravate possible

antisemitic charges of double loyalty; endanger American neutrality vis-à-vis the war; weaken Great Britain; and disturb the Arabs. His pamphlet proposed a platform on which U.S. Jewry could unite: complete, secured rights wherever Jews may live, either as citizens or as members of autonomous culturo-religious communities; fulfillment of the “moral obligations” undertaken by HMG and the League under the terms of the Balfour Declaration and interpreted in the Churchill memorandum of 1922; an economic reconstruction program for the next ten to twenty years permitting the maximum immigration to Palestine on the basis of that country’s absorptive capacity, while winning Arab confidence and cooperation; and an eventual “Palestine State” in which Jews there “will individually possess the full rights of citizenship and at the same time have full communal, cultural, and religious autonomy,” this position to be permanently guaranteed by the British Government and any future League of Nations. Seeking no sovereign power but only mankind’s inalienable rights, Lazon ended, the “world Jewish religious community” continued to bear “silent yet terrible witness to the eternal truths of justice and human brotherhood which derive from God Himself.”¹¹

The clarion call began to win acclaim. Instead of transforming their small homeland into “an artificial political expedient,” sociologist Bruno Lasker advised that Jews give up “their moorings in a tribal society” and work for a world in which all people might dwell in amity. In “complete sympathy,” Rabbi Elmer Berger of Temple Beth El ordered copies of Lazon’s manifesto for his Flint (Michigan) Reform congregation. The *Baltimore Morning Sun* published a summary of Lazon’s pamphlet, which brought Wallace Murray, the State Department’s anti-Zionist Near East Division chief, to forward the “very illuminating article” to his superiors, along with the evaluation that it represented a large section of U.S. Jewry less articulate than the American Zionists “and from whom little is heard.”

Willen tried to convince new AJC president Stroock that the Committee should mount an open challenge to the UPA and the American Jewish Congress, while non-Zionists Edward Norman and Bernard Flexner privately applauded Lazon’s message. Socialist leader Norman Thomas also praised his “impassioned courage” and “straight thinking.” Understanding souls like Baerwald, the AJC’s James Rosenberg, Messersmith, Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles, the financier Max Warburg, and *New York Times* publisher Arthur Hays Sulzberger were all kept informed by the Baltimore clergyman of his activities.¹²

Waldman sharply disagreed, finding Lazon’s thoughts “muddled”

and “disturbing” in their misinterpretations of fact. While most of the AJC executive currently opposed the idea of a Jewish commonwealth in principle, he wrote Greenbaum, the non-Zionists who entered the Agency in 1929 implied thereby that they would not combat Zionism’s ultimate objective – a state. The AJC did officially object to Jewish nationalism, defined by Waldman as Jewry’s organization into an international political entity such as the World Jewish Congress. Yet the AJC, like the Board of Deputies of British Jews and the Alliance Israelite, engaged in political activity while trying to protect the civil and religious rights of Jews without calling its associates’ native loyalties into question.

Lazaron’s solution for Palestine was more concessionary to the Arabs than even the 1939 White Paper, Waldman observed, although many Christian members of Parliament and the “overwhelming proportion” of Jews worldwide opposed that reversal of British policy. Moreover, the failure of Allied assurances to protect Jewish rights after World War I gave no reason for Lazaron’s placing hope in similar guarantees concerning Palestinian Jewry after this global conflict. His stance and that of “like-minded extremists,” Waldman suspected, was primarily and chiefly motivated by fear. As a dominating impulse, one that would destroy the AJC if Lazaron served as its spokesman, the latter “neither wins us friends nor defeats our enemies.”¹³

What another critic also characterized as Lazaron’s “fear psychosis” began to surface as well in Great Britain, whose established Board of Deputies of British Jews had elected Selig Brodetsky as its first pro-Zionist president in 1939. Speaking on behalf of “a numerous section” of British Jewry, Anthony de Rothschild urged Brodetsky not to publicly characterize assimilation as “a capitulation on the part of the Jewish people.” Rothschild and his patrician circle could not allow it to be thought by their fellow citizens of other faiths that they entertained nationalistic aspirations which were the reverse of their conception of British citizenship and “the traditional position” of Britain’s Jews. A lengthy reply from Brodetsky did not mollify Rothschild, who thought it claimed the “wholly repugnant” view that the Anglo-Jewish community should be regarded as some kind of “national unit forming part of another nation.” Moreover, concluded the squire of New Court, to create the impression that any considerable proportion of Anglo Jewry shared Brodetsky’s position seemed to be “most dangerous for the future of Jews of this country as well as of every other.”¹⁴

By citing the late Claude Montefiore as one leader who fully participated in British life while maintaining the integrity and functioning of the Jewish

religious community, Rothschild brought his own ideological differences with Brodetsky sharply into focus. The founder of a radical Reform Jewish movement in London, Montefiore had touted some aspects of the Christian ethic and the Gospels. The prolific scholar also deemed Zionism “narrow” and a betrayal of Jewish universalism. In May 1917, as president of the Anglo-Jewish Association, Montefiore had joined Board of Deputies president David Alexander in a letter that was published in the *London Times* and, a few days later, seconded there by several eminent British Jews. Special privileges accorded to the Jews of Palestine, the pair wrote, would “prove a veritable calamity for the whole Jewish people.” The establishment of Jewish nationhood in Palestine, founded upon a theory of Jewish homelessness, would stamp Jews everywhere else as “strangers in their native lands” and undermine “their hard-won position as citizens and nationals of those lands.”

The dangers of Zionism, Montefiore later averred in an essay by that title, included the fact that it fit in with antisemitic presumptions and aims. Asked by HMG to comment on a draft of the Balfour Declaration, he unsuccessfully objected to its phrase “a national home”: this assumed that Jews constituted a nationality, an implication he found “extremely prejudicial to Jewish interests, as it is intensely obnoxious to an enormous number of Jews.” Rothschild’s posture, like that of Lazon, signaled the debut of old wine in new bottles.¹⁵

Across the Atlantic, the sentiments underlying Lazon’s message almost torpedoed the United Jewish Appeal (UJA) for 1941. A joint JDC-UPA campaign in 1934 and 1935, by which all funds collected were split at a 60:40 ratio, respectively, had unraveled after three years because the bulk of the money came from opponents of the Jewish Agency. Reconstituted as the UJA in 1939, with the newly formed National Refugee Service (NRS) an offspring of the JDC, the unified campaign resumed for two years until UPA leaders sought an initial allocation of \$2,500,000 from those it termed “self-selected” non- and anti-Zionist philanthropists who, nevertheless, were taking steps that affected the future of Eretz Israel and of all Jews.

Lazon pressed Baerwald, Jacob Blaustein, Sidney Lansburgh, and others in the JDC-NRS camp that the Palestine budget must necessarily be limited by the possibility of immigration there, not granting Zionists “one dollar for their propaganda of a philosophy of life which the major givers of the community believe would be undermining the position of the American Jew.” For NRS advocate and soon JDC head Edward Warburg, keeping refugees from becoming a public charge in the United States and adjusting as quickly as possible to the domestic scene seemed of far greater importance

that either of the other two programs. A mutually satisfactory agreement for 1941 was finally reached, but for a very restricted purpose and a very limited time. Suspicion and acrimony lingered.¹⁶

Zionism's adversaries had ample cause for anxiety that spring. The UAHC chose Edward Israel, a strong Reform rabbinical voice for liberalism and Zionism, as its executive secretary, and fervent Zionist James Heller assumed the presidency of the CCAR. Stephen Wise, chairing the umbrella-group Emergency Committee for Zionist Affairs (ECZA), sent a telegram to American rabbis urging their support for the creation of "a Jewish army under [its] own insignia and allied command defending [its] homeland as [a] self respecting people." Concomitantly, the ECZA-sponsored American Palestine Committee began to garner significant support with congressmen, writers, and Christian clergy across the United States. The time had come, Lazaron wrote Sulzberger, for organizing a "Society of American Israelites" whose philosophy should be the religious and social ideals of prophetic Judaism, whose program should be "integration in American life!" The field should not be left "to them whose fanatic concepts of Jewishness misrepresent us and our children"; when the antisemites are yelling "alien Jew" would be too late, he added.¹⁷

Especially worrisome was Weizmann's quiet effort, just when German forces poised for a great offensive in North Africa against the Suez Canal, to harness leading American non-Zionists to his cause. At a special conference in New York's St. Regis Hotel, his expressed hope for an independent Jewish entity within an Arab federation under the wing of the democracies sparked Governor Herbert Lehman's statement that he did not wish to become part of anything that might embarrass London. At a follow-up meeting, former Jewish Agency Executive non-Zionist member Maurice Hexter pointed out his doubts that British or American bayonets could force an Arab-Jewish peace.

Lowenstein, Edward Warburg, and Henry Ittleson rebuffed the Zionist archspokesman's hope to work towards reorganizing the Agency lest they give "rubber-stamp approval" to Weizmann's policy. Privately, Max Warburg rebuked Stroock for agreeing to pursue talks with this "unreliable partner," and sought Norman's advice on how to further Jewish non-nationalist objectives in the postwar world. At the end of July, Sulzberger's newspaper enthusiastically featured the credo of Hebrew University president Judah Magnes, who insisted that only a state shared between Arab and Jew could solve the Palestine quagmire and live up to Jewish ideals.¹⁸

Choosing a more aggressive path, Lazaron brought his case directly to

Anthony Eden that autumn. Britain's Foreign Secretary, consistent opponent of a Palestinian Jewish fighting force and public supporter of an Arab Federation, heard from this visitor another side to Jewry's stand on Zionism. Influential American Jews and upper-crust British coreligionists such as Rothschild, Otto Schiff, and Robert Waley-Cohen, he was now informed, markedly differed with Weizmann's political agenda.

Lazaron's emphasis on the economic development of Palestine to satisfy both Jew and Arab, with the Agency reconstituted (including non-Zionists) to achieve this "sound and practical" end, sounded promising. Eden could hardly object to the cleric's assertion that the Balfour Declaration reflected HMG's desire to promote a Jewish homeland – not a state. "Very helpful," too, appeared Lazaron's concurrent focus on the right of Jews, a "vast majority" estimated by the American rabbi at 13-14 millions, to enjoy full rights worldwide, rather than be drawn into what he termed an "international political program" that might subject them to the charge of dual loyalty, jeopardize their security, and weaken their power to help stricken fellow Jews everywhere after the war.¹⁹

Buoyed by this welcome reception and his first discussions with Rothschild's New Court crowd, Lazaron made arrangements upon his return home for a small anti-Zionist group, including Strauss and FDR speech writer-advisor Samuel Rosenman, to meet at Sulzberger's home in mid-December 1941. The agenda would consider a statement favoring Palestine's economic and cultural development, while rejecting Jewish sovereignty there. These plans he discussed with Welles, who studiously avoided Palestine when addressing an Inter-American conference sponsored by the American Jewish Congress about postwar resettlement. Lazaron also gave the Under Secretary a copy of Rothschild's letter to Weizmann (also supplied to Eden), opposing Jewish statehood in Palestine as "wholly inconsistent" with the Atlantic Charter and likely to raise charges of dual allegiance against the majority of Jews living outside the Holy Land. Applying the Charter after the war would enable Jews to be absorbed into the life of each country concerned, Rothschild had asserted, and London could make the necessary arrangements with the Arabs to facilitate Jewish immigration into Palestine "and the highest development of which the country is capable."²⁰

Jerome Frank's attack on ardent political Zionists as unrepresentative "Jewish sojourners in America," which appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post* on December 6, Lazaron also recommended to Welles as "completely right." Former New Deal activist and one-time member of the isolationist America First Committee, this U.S. Court of Appeals judge's embrace of American

assimilationist values against the intolerant “tribalism” of any group hinted broadly that American Zionists, like native Communists and Fascists, should be regarded as aliens and hyphenates. AJC executive board member Joseph Proskauer, quoting Montefiore as proof text, hailed the author’s exposition, as did former *Nation* publisher Oscar Garrison Villard, but New York’s Yiddish press took him to task. Stephen Wise pontificated that Frank’s self-hatred as a Jew required that he be excommunicated from that community; Supreme Court Associate Justice Felix Frankfurter cautioned his friend Frank that because “among all the sorrow-laden peoples of the world none has been and is undergoing more agony than the Jews,” he should have taken the precaution of talking with someone knowledgeable about the “mischievous potentialities of misinterpretation” of what he wrote before “even unwittingly adding a straw to that burden.”²¹

The country’s entry immediately thereafter into World War II gave Lazon et al. additional cause to corroborate Frank’s observation that Zionism represented a minority movement among America’s divided Jews. Responding to the formation of the Committee for a Jewish Army, an Irgun-inspired group under Hillel Kook’s direction which demanded Jewry’s right to take its proper place in “the ranks of free peoples of the earth” by joining the Allies in a 200,000-strong army, a *New York Times* editorial trumpeted British concerns about Arab antagonism to a Zionist state. The editorial concluded that the full hopes of Jews could only be achieved by “the winning of a new world in which Jews along with other religious and national minorities may live peacefully and happily in every nation, enjoying the full rights of other citizens.” Lazon spurred anti-Zionists on the AJC executive to consider some public response, while his synagogue bulletin (echoing the *Times*’s editorial stance) was dispatched to prominent citizens and printed in the *Congressional Record*. He also contacted individuals, as did Sulzberger and his wife Iphigene née Ochs, to drop their association with the new committee. Yet the anti-Zionist rabbi remained, to his increasing frustration, “a leader without followers,” no organization standing behind him.²²

Matters changed dramatically on the afternoon of February 27, 1942, when the Jewish Army issue came before the annual convention of the CCAR. Thirty-three rabbis submitted a resolution demanding that the Jewish yishuv (community) of Palestine “be given the privilege of establishing a military force which will fight under its own banner on the side of the democracies, under allied command, to defend its own land and the Near East to the end that the victory of democracy may be hastened everywhere.” The committee on resolutions

recommended a much milder substitute which sympathized with Palestinian Jews being given the “opportunity to fight in defense of their homeland.”

Opponents of the original resolution, such as Louis Wolsey, Norman Gerstenfeld and Samuel Goldenson, wished the CCAR not to endorse militant Zionism thereby, a step which would also alienate many congregants and “lead to other mischief.” Supporters like Balfour Brickner and Maurice Eisendrath, however, believed that the yishuv merited the same recognition as other peoples, with Philip Bernstein insisting that the Jewish National Home in Palestine would be more necessary than ever when the war and “the current tragedy of Israel” ended. Vice President Solomon Freehof attempted mediation by proposing that the whole debate and both resolutions be expunged from the record, a motion that failed by a vote of 45-51. Ultimately, with Heller as presiding officer deciding on his own to put the initial resolution before the floor, it carried that Friday by 64-38.²³

The CCAR’s rescinding of the neutrality agreement of 1935 galvanized the anti-Zionists into action. Goldenson, egged on by congregant Lewis Strauss of his Temple Emanu-El and especially by Silver’s public assertion while in London that American Jewry solidly approved of a Jewish fighting force, obtained 70-odd signatures of fellow Reform clergy to a public statement opposing a Jewish Army and favoring a postwar world governed by the universalist principles of Isaiah and the American Declaration of Independence. Meetings of March 30 and April 2 in Philadelphia’s Hotel Warwick, presided over by Louis Wolsey of that city, resulted in a decision to call a conference of “non-Zionist Reform rabbis” on June 1-2 in Atlantic City to combat what William Fineshriber termed “reactionary” Jewish nationalism and to rally around Judaism as solely a religious identity. Over the names of 23 CCAR members, invitations were mailed to 160 of their colleagues on April 15.

Lazaron gave regular updates (including letters from Rothschild) to Welles and Eden and authored *Is This the Way?*, which circulated amidst an approving State Department postwar Territorial Committee. He also tried assiduously to persuade Maurice Wertheim, Stroock’s successor, that the AJC should halt all negotiations with Agency Executive chairman David Ben-Gurion over a pro-Zionist program for Jewry after the war.²⁴

Realizing that the anticipated gathering in Atlantic City might well trigger a schism in the Reform movement, Heller sought a *modus vivendi* with the anti-Zionist coterie. Writing a personal letter to the CCAR membership, he appealed for unity and a democratic adherence to majority opinion, and asked the coalition to withdraw its invitation. At the same time, with the

sympathetic Freehof in attendance, he offered a settlement to Wolsey and Goldenson: if the dissenters cancelled the June meeting and thus abandoned any organized opposition, he would propose a bylaw at the next convention making neutrality on Zionism a permanent CCAR rule and even admit that the 1942 vote on the Jewish Army had been a mistake. Upon polling their associates, only two (Berger and Clifton Levy) of nineteen opposing any delay in the scheduled conference, Wolsey and Goldenson agreed to the compromise provided that Heller also expunge the resolution from the official minutes of the CCAR record. He refused, his adversaries' special gathering inevitably went forward.²⁵

"Under the grandiloquent titles of papers and discussions" being prepared for Atlantic City, the CCAR president aptly observed to Freehof, "a lot of dynamite lies concealed." "Battling for religion," Wolsey felt that a fighting stand had to be taken against "the unholy totalitarianism and aggression" of Zionism, which secularized the Jew and even developed into "a certain amount of moral degeneracy." David Philipson, lone survivor of the Pittsburgh Platform signatories whose 1918 letter to the *New York Times* had judged Zionism "a distinct menace" to the best interest of world Jewry, expressed his great joy that Wolsey and company "are doing a deed of great loyalty to the high significance of our universalistic Judaism."

In like vein, Hyman Schachtel suggested that the group be called "the party for prophetic Judaism," stressing the Reform movement's original ideals. "For too many years we have been playing the piper while the Zionists have been calling the tune," opined Irving Reichert. The Zionists' unparalleled campaign of "vilification and abuse" against this faction raised other latent resentments, including the tendency, Abraham Cronbach observed, to revive in the Reform congregation long-abandoned Orthodox modes such as more Hebrew and more rituals, some colleagues "even proposing a restoration of the *Talith* [prayer shawl] and the *Yarmulke* [skull cap]." Our larger challenge, Gerstenfeld concluded, is "to evaluate the danger of racial-national-Zionistic concepts to the Reform religionist position and its leadership of the unaffiliated masses of American Jewry, who today realize keenly the bankruptcy of nationalism and are eager to create an 'all-out' liberal Judaism that will sweep into its orbit the entire next generation" of U.S. Jews.²⁶

"You must understand how profoundly grateful I am, after these many years of fighting the battle alone," wrote Lazon to Rothschild, "to see the gathering strength of what I am convinced is the only sane and practical approach." From Welles, he had learned confidentially that the American

and British general staffs deemed a Jewish Army per se neither helpful nor desirable from the standpoint of increasing the military efficiency of the Allied forces in the Middle East, particularly since adding another national unit to the many such units already employed there would only make “a bad situation worse.” Welles found *Is This the Way?* “an admirable, deeply moving, and truly statesmanlike presentation,” which would hopefully have a very wide circulation and thus do much to “help people see clearly during these increasingly critical days.” The latter included Rommel’s stunning advance in the Libyan desert, as well as American Zionist endorsement in May at New York’s Biltmore Hotel of a Jewish military force, unlimited Jewish immigration, and Jewish sovereignty in Palestine after the war.

Lazaron was particularly vexed that 350 rabbis, including Heller and his Conservative and Orthodox Jewish counterparts, signed their names to a pro-Jewish Army advertisement by what was now called the American Emergency Committee for Zionist Affairs (AECZA). The Baltimorean and comrades-in-arms found comfort, therefore, in thirty-four-year-old Elmer Berger’s crusade in Flint against “corrosive” Jewish nationalism and in the Wolsey disciple’s pamphlet *Why I Am a Non-Zionist*, published in May to cheers from Proskauer and HUC president Julian Morgenstern. The hour had struck to organize these kindred spirits.²⁷

The thirty-six CCAR dissidents, self-styled “rabbis in American Israel,” who convened on June 1-2, 1942 in Atlantic City came to champion “complete universalism” as rooted in prophetic Judaism and the democratic way of life. Philipson lectured on the incompatibility of Reform Judaism with Zionism, while Lazaron’s address seconded British opposition to a Jewish Army and branded Zionism’s ultimate goal as wholly inconsistent with the Atlantic Charter. Wolsey and others spent much time criticizing the HUC student body and some of its faculty for shifting to Zionism; Morgenstern placed primary blame on the CCAR’s becoming dominated by graduates of Stephen Wise’s Jewish Institute of Religion, almost all of whom had fallen under that New Yorker’s formidable influence.

The group’s final statement, which would gain ninety-six signatories (some 20 percent of the CCAR), declared a readiness to labor unstintingly for the yishuv’s economic, cultural and spiritual endeavors and to endorse Jewry’s right, as that of people of every faith and race, to live securely anywhere in a postwar world established upon justice and righteousness. Support could not be given to political Zionism, however, these endorsers concluded, “which tends to confuse our fellowmen about our place and function in

society and also diverts our own attention from our historic role to live as a religious community wherever we may dwell.” Wolsey appointed Fineshriber, Goldenson, Berger, and Schachtel to explore the possibility of forming a lay-rabbinical organization, with Lazaron as chair, to advance the cause.²⁸

Hopes for quick success dissipated, however, during the coming months. *New Palestine*, in a tone typical for the American Jewish press, blasted those who mouthed “slogans of a bygone day,” sought to appease antisemites, and made Judaism play “a minimal part in their personal lives.” Most of the Yiddish newspapers followed *The Day’s* editor, Samuel Margoshes, in pillorying these rabbis’ “pale and innocuous, bloodless and helpless Judaism,” as opposed to Zionism’s creating “a renaissance in all forms of Jewish life and letters.” With moderates Goldenson and Jonah Wise pitted against Lazaron, Berger, and Wolsey, the dissidents could only agree upon a revised statement by the end of August. Through the initiative of Bernstein, Silver, Heller, Brickner, and some others, 757 Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform clergymen countered impressively with *Zionism: An Affirmation of Judaism*, attacking the final revision as “a cruel blow” and declaring that “there can be little hope of opening the doors of Palestine for Jewish immigration after the war without effective political action.” By a vote of 42-9, students at HUC approved these sentiments as well.²⁹

Lazaron valiantly took up the cudgels for anti-Zionism. He urged Wertheim not to sacrifice principle for unity and become “tied to the Zionist kite” by backing Ben-Gurion’s proposal to accept Jewish statehood in exchange for Zionists’ renouncing WJC-type “Diaspora nationalism.” Rather than endorse this “Cos Cob formula,” he pointed out to the AJC president that the “fresh air of Dr. Magnes’s suggestions” reflected Zionist party divisions in the Promised Land which should be avoided by American Jews.

In consultation with Strauss and using information secretly provided by the British Embassy, Lazaron also prepared an advertisement criticizing a distinct Jewish fighting force and publicizing the Atlantic City platform. The disastrous fall of Tobruk to Rommel’s Afrika Korps on June 21, coupled with full-page Committee for a Jewish Army newspaper advertisements, spurred Lazaron to press for publishing his rejoinder. Many in the Wolsey group preferred not to become embroiled in this regard, however, just when the yishuv was menaced and the Western media publicized the first news about the systematic slaughter of Europe’s Jews. With Welles arranging an appointment at the White House, Lazaron next found an understanding audience in Eleanor Roosevelt when he made the distinction between

understandable sympathy for Jewish achievements in Palestine (as FDR had recently conveyed to the American Palestine Committee) and support of Zionist political ambitions there. The zealot pressed ahead.³⁰

Sulzberger expressed private encouragement but pursued his own path. On June 14 the *New York Times* again aired Magnes's position in a substantial report. Informed by Lazaron of Wertheim's possible union with the Zionists, the publisher warned that "in any such combination, those who think as we do are bound to play the part of the lady in the well-known drama *The Lady and the Tiger*." While in London that summer, he met with Rothschild, whose memorandum to Eden was "quite in line" with Sulzberger's own thinking. Speaking to Eden and to Colonial Secretary Lord Cranborne, Sulzberger suggested that the sanctity of the Holy Land might be kept inviolate through a large state composed of Palestine, Transjordan, Syria, and Iraq, envisaging an Arab population of at least nine million and allowing for considerable Jewish immigration but not sovereignty. The terms of the Atlantic Charter must apply to Jews as to everyone else, giving them the right to live anywhere they chose, but the new state would insure them a haven should they choose. Only political Zionists would object, he informed the two cabinet ministers, but they certainly did not represent united "Jewish opinion." Sulzberger extended congratulations to Lazaron on the "excellent" revised statement of the Atlantic City insurgents, printed in his newspaper on August 30. Yet his long-standing practice of not assisting any publication other than the *New York Times* mandated that he refuse a request to contribute money to the group's projected magazine. A departure from this rule, Sulzberger explained, "even for a cause as worthy of support as this, would complicate my life unnecessarily."³¹

Still, the anti-Zionist clique had reason for some optimism. Working with three fellow Baltimoreans, Reform Rabbis William Rosenau, Abraham Shaw, and Abraham Shusterman, Lazaron projected a bi-weekly magazine called *The Jewish Challenge* that would be distributed for several months gratis to all congressmen, governors, and a large list of Jews and Christian ministers. The first financial pledges, via Lazaron and Berger contacts, came in September. *The Flint Plan*, a pamphlet describing how the Michigan circle countered Zionist campaigns, was distributed, along with postcards first prepared by Berger which sought support across the country. Soliciting Magnes's reaction to the August statement of principles, which elicited in turn the Jerusalem resident's critique of current Jewish nationalism as "unhappily chauvinistic and narrow and terroristic in the best style of East European nations," Lazaron circulated

Magnes's response and then published it without authorization.

In early October James Rosenberg, who informed Lazon on of the opposition crystallizing in the AJC to the "Cos Cob formula," inquired if he would consider permitting friends to advance the clergyman's name as Wertheim's successor. This did not come to pass, but a meeting of key anti-Zionists three weeks later agreed to engage former AJC public relations specialist Sidney Wallach should enough funds be raised to spread the group's message.³²

The cause received an unexpected boost from Sulzberger, who accepted Lazon's invitation to talk before his temple brotherhood on November 5. The address, featured in the *New York Times*, "stirred up a hornet's nest," as the delighted publisher informed Jerome Frank. The continued demand by "Zionist extremists" for a Jewish fighting force, posited the speaker, would embarrass the Allies and could be distorted by the Axis in the Arab world; considerable Jewish immigration to Palestine without statehood (exactly his suggestion to Eden and Cranborne) could be achieved by joining that much contested land with a few neighboring countries. Sulzberger turned down Lazon's subsequent idea to lead the assault on the Zionists, however, arguing that if he were to become too involved, "people would think the Times prejudiced in its reporting." We have to speak individually about these matters, he added; to speak collectively against nationalist aspirations would "only make the same mistake" as the Zionists, who "band together" to speak for them.³³

Lazon also answered a request from Welles for comments on the Under Secretary's proposed reply to an eloquent proclamation of the Committee for a Jewish Army by the celebrated author Pierre Van Paassen. In the rabbi's opinion (as he advocated to the First Lady), Washington and London needed to distinguish officially between sympathy for suffering Jewry and Palestine's development as a Jewish homeland, on the one hand, and Zionist political objectives, "to which no chancellory in the world has either pledged itself or would at this juncture pledge itself," on the other. On November 13, a thankful Welles, who also received from Sulzberger a copy of Magnes's views, suggested that Lazon write Rothschild to communicate with Eden on this matter; he would discuss it with HMG's ambassador, Lord Halifax. Lazon promptly did so, asking the Anglo Jew to share his letter with others of similar views like Otto Schiff, Lionel Cohen, Neville Laski, Basil Henriques, and Louis Gluckstein, M.P.³⁴

Another promising turn came on November 16, when Goldenson and Jonah Wise received a warm reception at a meeting with several influential

Jewish laymen in New York. Sulzberger, Edward Warburg, Baerwald, Ittleson and Hexter, along with NRS president and UJA chairman William Rosenwald and five others, "heartily commended the rabbinical group for its initiative and good sense." The one hope for self-respect on the American scene for the Jews, in the view of the gentlemen present that afternoon, lay in a religious organization. The rebuke from the over 700 rabbis was taken as an evidence of progress and seen as an acceptable public notice that not all American Jews were Zionists. The meeting resulted in the determination of the attendees to carry on, with Hexter instructed to report as soon as possible on a program of procedure.³⁵

One week later the eastern contingent of anti-Zionist rabbis convened in Wolsey's Rodeph Shalom congregation for decisive action. Fineshriber revealed that the AJC executive would assemble on December 6 to select Wertheim's successor. Should the anti-Zionist element gain control, his source had indicated, the \$25,000 needed urgently by the rabbinical group would be provided; if it failed, those individuals might secede, with their funds then at the group's disposal. Coming on the heels of Sulzberger's Baltimore address and the New York meeting with lay leaders, Fineshriber's information proved encouraging news indeed. Considerable discussion which followed resulted in Berger's being chosen executive director contingent upon raising the necessary funds. Wolsey telephoned the news to Berger, who accepted enthusiastically.

The time had arrived to choose a name for the new organization. Gerstenfeld's proposed "Council of American Jewry" appeared not religious in sentiment, while Goldenson's suggestions (World-Jewish Welfare Association, Jewish Religious Association, or Jewish Fellowship Association) were judged too general. "The Council for American Judaism," advanced by Lazon by that day, received unanimous approval. It met the desires of the group's financial backers; it satisfied the request of UAHC president Adolph Rosenberg, as conveyed by Philipson at a previous gathering, "that Americanism be stressed"; and it aptly defined the movement.

Formal announcement of the Council's formation, along with adopting a constitution, reporting on funds and a lecture bureau, and inducting Berger into office, was to take place in New York on December 7, 1942. That date was purposely chosen for the historic association with America's entry into the war one year previously, as well as to mark a significant statement coming one day after both the ZOA-Revisionist Zionist convention in New York and the meeting of the AJC executive board. Key laymen were to be invited,

Morgenstern and two other members scheduled to deliver brief papers, and Lazon selected to present the facts in a brief against the Zionists.³⁶

Elated, the individual most instrumental in this *dénouement* spread the word to his highest contacts in Washington. Informing Mrs. Roosevelt of the new Council, Lazon suggested that Harold Ickes be advised to temper his views for a principal speech to the ZOA two weeks hence. As Secretary of the Interior, his presence would give weight to “extremist” demands embarrassing to the administration and running counter to the views of “another very powerful group” within American Jewry.

Separately, Welles was asked to have a letter addressed to Lazon by the Under Secretary, his superior Cordell Hull, or Roosevelt – not so formal as the Balfour Declaration but having “the same profound effect” – for the Council’s inauguration. An appreciation of the work achieved in Palestine should be coupled, “Morris” advised “dear Sumner,” with an emphasis that no pledges as to its future political status could be made, since that had to be determined by a Palestinian Jewish-Christian-Moslem consensus, and that the Holy Land symbolized a center “for three great religious influences of our western world.” The communication, together with a similar letter from Eden, Lazon stressed, would be welcomed by anti-Zionists in the United States and England and by the vast majority of the American Jewish Committee, would strengthen the hands of moderates everywhere, and would tend to stop “reckless Zionist agitation.”³⁷

The devastating news on November 24 about State Department confirmation of rumors since August regarding the true dimensions of the Holocaust, which it authorized Stephen Wise to publicize, immediately threw Lazon’s plans into disarray. Half of the estimated four million Jews under the swastika had been slain in an “extermination campaign,” the AECZA chairman reported to the press that evening, with Hitler ordering the murder of the entire number by the end of the year. “Of course we knew all this, but it is a frightful and appalling situation,” Lazon wrote to Wolsey. He proposed that the December 7th date should be reconsidered, since the Council’s inaugural declaration might strike “a false note” just when Jews all over the world gathered publicly to mourn for their murdered families in Europe: one had to be “awfully careful about these things and not give those whom we oppose any ground to attack us.”

Of course anything that could be done to prevent “wholesale massacre” would be done, Lazon dashed off on a postcard to Welles a few days later. “But what can be done in territory occupied by the Nazis? Is this yet another

futile stirring up of excitement?" My broadcast on the "Message of Israel" program, he closed, would offer "a plea for calm, for sorrow borne with dignity, for faith in friends in justice and in God."³⁸

Wolsey vigorously opposed any additional postponement, however. Goldenson had counseled caution at the Atlantic City meeting in light of a shocking newspaper account about the mass killing of European Jews, and Rabbi Ely Pilchik had pressed Lazaron one month later to halt "the widening breach" in American Jewish ranks at a time when the press reported that over one million Jews had been massacred in Europe and more were "doomed to be slaughtered." But the elder mutineer from Philadelphia insisted to Lazaron that there was always a reason why their band should not do anything: "Rommel is making his way into Egypt, or Rommel is getting into Palestine, or a holocaust (sic) is taking place in Poland." He was not worried by any attackers but about "their committing Jewish suicide. We must save them from themselves."

From a hospital sickbed, Wolsey added two days later: "If American Jewry is sabotaged by Zionist trickery and politics, as the German situation was sabotaged by the Madison Square meetings for boycott of Germany in the early days of the Nazi regime, then nothing whatsoever can be done for the Polish Jews. The salvation and protection of our persecuted brethren abroad depends exclusively on the morale, the unity, the wisdom, and the generosity of the Jews in America." With Zionism "sabotaging the effectiveness of American Judaism," he insisted, "the psychological time for our meeting" was now.³⁹

Unbeknownst to the secessionists, Lazaron's appeal to Welles for some official letter quickly struck a responsive chord in the corridors of State. Given the Department's concern about growing pro-Zionist sentiment, including the endorsements by eminent Americans of the Committee for a Jewish Army and the American Palestine Committee, Secretary Hull had used the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Balfour Declaration to urge a wider objective: "We must have a world in which Jews, like every other race, are free to abide in peace and honor." Seeking further to mute the Zionist publicity that was causing the Palestine cauldron to boil, Near East Division chief Murray urged Welles to follow up Lazaron's suggestion as "an act of far-seeing statesmanship," enhancing U.S. prestige in the Arab and Muslim world, while stopping "reckless Zionist agitation." Particularly worrisome to the Division was the declaration in early December by 63 senators and 182 members of Congress that "millions of homeless Jews" should be entitled in

the postwar period to reconstruct their lives in Palestine. Shortly thereafter, thanks to AECZA-sponsored efforts by Bernstein and his cousin Rabbi Milton Steinberg, the Christian Council on Palestine arose, committed to “the establishment of a Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine in relation to an over-all settlement in the post-war era.”⁴⁰

On December 7, 1942, at 10:30 a.m., Wolsey called the inaugural meeting of the new anti-Zionist rabbinical body to order. The twenty-six men present at the Hotel New Yorker that day settled on the American Council for Judaism as their movement’s new name. As for the AJC, Goldenson explained that since its executive proceedings would not be made public until the Committee’s general meeting the following month, no financial help could be expected before then from sympathizers in that quarter. The group ratified the appointment of Berger, who later that afternoon asked Baerwald, Rosenberg, and other laymen present for participation and immediate action. Lazon’s revision of the Statement of Principles met with a varied critique, and the Council agreed that a condensed version should be issued without delay. Wolsey’s report on the misuse of UPA funds by the AECZA was referred to a special investigating committee and prospects for a lecture bureau received brief mention. At 6 p.m., Schachtel rose to thank Wolsey for presiding and the meeting adjourned.⁴¹

Thus came to pass the first anti-Zionist organization in American history. Its genesis lay in the anxiety felt by a small minority within the CCAR regarding the impact of political Zionism on Jewish existence. In their view, as Lazon put it, Zionism’s “philosophy of despair, which assumes that our present status is hopeless and that democracy is a failure,” delayed the Jew’s integration into American life, made impossible a peaceful resolution of the thorny Palestine question, and challenged the universalist values of prophetic Judaism.⁴²

These fears, first articulated by Lazon after the commencement of World War II, were aggravated by the upsurge of enthusiasm for a Jewish Army. The army issue ultimately served as the percussion cap that set off an explosion which threatened the Reform movement itself. It also enabled London and Washington to claim that American Jewry was divided over Zionism despite the May 1942 Biltmore Program, the broad rabbinic endorsement reflected in *Zionism: An Affirmation of Judaism*, and mounting Jewish lay support for pro-Zionist causes.

The American Council for Judaism, however, never remotely approached realizing the hopes of its original founders. The final preference of

Morgenstern and others to work within the CCAR forestalled permanent schism. The increasing stress by Lazon, Wolsey, and especially Berger on a program more in the direction of "anti-Zionism than of pro-Reform" sparked the departure of Shaw and Shusterman by the end of December 1942. That shift in emphasis, which led to a second veto the next month of Heller's repeated offer at reconciliation, became especially pronounced in mid-1943. An internecine struggle erupted in the Council between a virulently anti-Zionist faction and others devoted to their concept of the religious dimension of American Jewish life. (By then, with chairman Lessing Rosenwald and public-relations consultant Wallach uninterested in formal religion, only twenty-six rabbis still retained membership.) This tension within Council ranks surfaced in the extreme when the leaders of Hebrew Congregation Beth Israel of Houston insisted, at the end of that year, that new members sign a declaration committing themselves to the principles embodied in the Pittsburgh Platform.⁴³

Freehof, now president of the CCAR, failed to persuade the Houston defectors that they misunderstood the nature of Reform Judaism. Earlier, he astutely observed that none of the CCAR Zionist majority would embrace the extremist position that American Jews were in exile, that the battle against antisemitism was hopeless, and that nationhood meant that if a Jewish state were created in Palestine they would become citizens of the new commonwealth. On the other hand, Freehof appeared close to the mark in thinking that the anti-Zionist rabbis did not fully believe that Jews were only a "church," that they had no bond of historic brotherhood--call it "people," "nationality," or any other term.

Yet the Reform Zionists persisted in characterizing their anti-Zionist CCAR colleagues as assimilationists, while the latter continued to portray the Zionists as secular Diaspora nationalists. Both descriptions, Freehof rightly concluded, were unfair. Still, Stephen Wise lost no time in branding the new Council's spokesmen "irreconcilable, superannuated, odious individuals"; Silver soon followed with "false prophets of Ersatz Judaism." The Council's intensely felt sentiments were temperate by contrast, with complaints that the Zionists "dominated" American life, exercised authority in "tyrannical" fashion, and were rapidly becoming "power mad."⁴⁴

In short order, the anti-Zionist rabbis were not merely beleaguered but reviled, castigated as traitors in their people's most anguished hour. Wrote a U.S. Army private to Lazon: You consider Zionism "embarrassing" to the British and the Allies. "Well, the Gentile world has embarrassed us for 2,000

years, and is embarrassing us right now to the tune of about five million people about to be wiped out. We will live or die AS A PEOPLE!" The Council's lobbying against Zionist aspirations, Rabbi Israel Levinthal exhorted fellow Brooklynite Rabbi Isaac Landman, turned the issue from a question of free speech to "a question of war that you have begun to wage against the millions of Jews . . . who see in Zionism the only hope for the oppressed Jews throughout the world You are going to meet the resentment of every right-thinking and self-respecting Jew."

On June 22, 1943, the CCAR convention declared that "it discerns no essential incompatibility between Reform Judaism and Zionism." Two months later, American Jews united behind the Biltmore Program at the American Jewish Conference, swept along by Silver's eloquent appeal that "the immemorial problem of our national homelessness, which is the principle source of our millennial tragedy, remains as stark and as menacing today as it ever was." When the Council protested in a statement that saw print in the *New York Times*, B'nai B'rith president Henry Monsky and four rabbis (including Heller) roundly denounced the move as a calculated and treacherous attempt to sabotage the conference's expression of American Jewry's collective will.⁴⁵

Like the grandees of Anglo-Jewry and Magnes, the founders of the American Council for Judaism failed to appreciate that their abstract principles did not keep pace with the remorseless realities of Jewish life. These stalwarts of classical Reform Judaism hailed from the older members of the CCAR. An anti-Zionist statement which circulated among Hebrew Union College graduates in the early stages of the Council was signed by 70 percent of the members of the classes from 1883 to 1893 and 50 percent of the graduates from 1894 to 1903, but only 28 percent from 1904 to 1914, 23 percent from 1915 to 1924, 18 percent from 1925 to 1934, and 17 percent from 1935 to 1942.⁴⁶

The fires of the Holocaust seared the young Reform rabbinical wing, as it did their fellow American Jews, converting them to a visceral understanding of the indissoluble link that existed between Jewish catastrophe and Jewish sovereignty. Accordingly, they would rally to the Zionist standard after V-E Day and well beyond, seeing the reborn State of Israel as a bridge against their people's apocalyptic despair. Those few who did not were overwhelmed by the force of history.

Notes

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- 1 Excerpt of Lazaron radio address, Dec. 2, 1939, file 112, Robert Szold MSS., Zionist Archives and Library, New York City (hereafter ZA), now at the Central Zionist Archives (CZA), Jerusalem, Israel.
- 2 David Polish, "The Changing and the Constant in the Reform Rabbinate," *American Jewish Archives* 35 (1983): 298-300; Lazaron to Silver, Oct. 4, 1937, and Silver to Lazaron, Feb. 4, 1938, both in file 5, drawer 2, Abba Hillel Silver MSS., The Temple, Cleveland, Ohio.
- 3 Lazaron to Baerwald, Oct. 5, 1939, Box 64, Lewis Strauss MSS., American Jewish Historical Society, Waltham, Mass.; Lazaron to Skall, Nov. 14, 1939; and Lazaron to Baerwald, Nov. 24, 1939; both in Box 3046, Morris Lazaron MSS., American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio; "Dialogue of a Protestant, a Catholic, and a Jew," Mar. 27, 1934, Chronos file, American Jewish Committee (hereafter AJC) Archives (now at YIVO, Center for Jewish History), New York City; Baerwald draft to Lazaron, Nov. 29, 1939, Box 2, Lazaron MSS.; Lazaron to Silver, Nov. 30, 1939, Box 3046, Lazaron MSS. For the vacuity of the Evian Conference, see A. J. Sherman, *Island Refuge: Britain and Refugees from the Third Reich, 1933-1939* (London, 1973). The Balfour Declaration pledged HMG to facilitate the creation of "a Jewish national home" in Palestine.
- 4 *New Palestine*, Dec. 6, 1939; ZOA administrative committee, Dec. 3, 1939; ZOA executive committee, Dec. 13, 1939, both in ZA; Silver to Lazaron, Dec. 5, and 14, 1939, Box 3046, Lazaron MSS.
- 5 Montor to Silver, Dec. 4, 1939, Lipsky—Keren HaYesod file, ZA.
- 6 Waldman to Adler, Dec. 18, 1939; Landau to Waldman, Dec. 18, 1939; Waldman memo on State Dept. visit, Dec. 18, 1939; Lazaron draft, "Why Dr. Weizmann Should Not Come," Dec. 12, 1939, and Waldman memo attached, n.d.; all in Jewish Agency 1939-40 file, AJC Archives. Brandeis was apprehensive lest Weizmann raise with Roosevelt a proposal currently popular in Europe regarding the transfer of minorities. Goldman to Szold, Dec. 15, 1939, Box 30, Szold MSS.
- 7 Edward B. Glick, *The Triangular Connection: America, Israel, and American Jews* (London, 1982), 41-44, 48; Ronald Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century* (Boston, 1980), 189-190.
- 8 Polish, "The Changing and the Constant," 268-284; Michael A. Meyer, "Yahadut Reformit V'Ziyonut B'America: HaNisyonot HaRishonot L'Hitkarvut Ra'ayonit," *HaZiyonut* 9 (1984): 95-110.
- 9 *CCAR 46th Annual Convention, Chicago*, 45 (1935); *CCAR 48th Annual Convention, Columbus*, 47 (1937); Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (New York, 1988), 317-329.
- 10 Atkinson to Wolsey, Nov. 3, 1942, Box 1445, Louis Wolsey MSS., American Jewish

Archives; Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, p. 330.

- 11 Morris L. Lazon, *Homeland or State: The Real Issue* (Baltimore, n.d.), Box 4, Lazon MSS. The 1922 Churchill White Paper assured the Arabs that HMG did not intend to create a wholly Jewish Palestine and that Palestine's economic absorptive capacity would henceforth determine Jewish immigration. Concurrently, it declared that the Balfour Declaration "was not susceptible to change" and that the Jewish community "is in Palestine as of right and not on sufferance."
- 12 Berger to Lazon, Mar. 7, 1940, Box 4, Lazon MSS.; *Baltimore Morning Sun*, Mar. 7, 1940; Murray to Berle and Long, Mar. 7, 1940, 867N.01/1699, RG 59, State Department Records, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (hereafter SD); Willen to Stroock, Mar. 9, 1940, Zionists—non-Zionists 1937-40 file, AJC Archives; Norman to Lazon, Dec. 14, 1939, Box 3046, Lazon MSS.; Flexner to Lazon, Mar. 13, 1940; Thomas to Lazon; both in Box 4, Lazon MSS.; Lazon to Rosenberg, Apr. 26, 1940, Box 2, Lazon MSS. For Sulzberger's grappling with his Jewish identity, see chap. 5.
- 13 Waldman to Greenbaum, Mar. 7, 1940, Zionist—non-Zionist—Lazon file; Waldman to Wallach, Mar. 8, 1940, Zionism 1941-42 file; Waldman to Stroock, Mar. 12, 1940, Zionism 1936-43 file; Waldman to Willen, Mar. 12, 1940, Zionists—non-Zionists 1937-40 file; Waldman to Stroock, Mar. 18, 1940, Chronos file; all in AJC MSS.
- 14 Carl Alpert, "Rabbi Lazon 'Explains,'" *The Reconstructionist*, Mar. 29, 1940; Rothschild to Brodetsky, Dec. 16, 1940, file 3/90; Brodetsky to Rothschild, Jan. 16, 1941, file 3/92; Rothschild to Brodetsky, Feb. 12, 1941, file 3/100; all in Brodetsky MSS., Anglo-Jewish Association Archives, Mocatta Library, University College, London, England. For the paternalistic circle of which Rothschild was a part, see Chaim Bermant, *The Cousinhood: The Anglo-Jewish Gentry* (London, 1971).
- 15 Rothschild to Brodetsky, Feb. 12, 1941, file 3/100, Brodetsky MSS.; *An English Jew: The Life and Writings of Claude Montefiore*, ed. Eduard Kessler (London, 1989); *The Times*, May 14, 1917; Leonard Stein, *The Balfour Declaration* (London, 1961), p. 525.
- 16 Norman to Murray, Mar. 6, 1941, 840.48 Refugees/2478, RG 59, SD; Lazon to Baerwald, Dec. 30, 1940, Box 2, Lazon MSS.; Warburg to Schewel, Feb. 19, 1941, MRD-1, file 4/1, United Jewish Appeal Archives, New York City.
- 17 Polish, "The Changing and the Constant," 287; Monty Noam Penkower, *The Holocaust and Israel Reborn: From Catastrophe to Sovereignty* (Urbana, 1994), p. 116; Lazon to Sulzberger, Apr. 28, 1941, Box 3045, Lazon MSS.
- 18 Warburg memo, July 24, 1941, Jewish Agency 1934-42 file, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) Archives, New York City; Warburg to Stroock, June 28, 1941, and July 7, 1941, Box 3045, Lazon MSS.; Norman to Warburg, Aug. 4, 1941, Zionism 1936-43 files, AJC Archives; *New York Times*, July 20, 1941.
- 19 *Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA)*, June 1, 1941; Eden to Stonehewer-Bird, Aug. 15, 1941, PREM, 4/52/5, Public Record Office (PRO), Kew, England; Diaries, Sept. 1941, Box 7, Lazon MSS.; Lazon to Eden, Oct. 3, 1941; and Lazon memo to Eden, n.d. (Oct. 3, 1941); both in Box 121, Lewis Strauss-II MSS., Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, West Branch, Iowa.

- 20 Lazon to Strauss, Nov. 7, 1941, Box 121, Strauss-II MSS.; Welles to Lazon, Nov. 14, 1941; Lazon to Welles, Nov. 17, 1941; Lazon to Baerwald, Nov. 17, 1941; all in Box 3045, Lazon MSS.; Welles address, Nov. 23, 1941, file U-134, World Jewish Congress Archives, New York City (now at the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio); Eden to Moyne, Nov. 1941, FO 371/27129, PRO; Rothschild to Weizmann, Dec. 3, 1941, Chaim Weizmann Archives (hereafter WA), Rehovot, Israel. For the New Court—Zionist talks, as well as Weizmann's reply, see note of meeting, Sept. 9, 1941, and Weizmann to Rothschild, Dec. 31, 1941, WA. The war objectives of the Atlantic Charter, a joint statement in August 1941 by Churchill and Roosevelt, included Anglo-American respect for "the right of all peoples to choose the form of Government under which they will live." *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1941* (Washington, D.C., 1958), 1: 367-9.
- 21 Jerome N. Frank, "Red-White-and-Blue Herring," *Saturday Evening Post*, Dec. 6, 1941; Lazon to Welles, Dec. 1, 1941, Box 3045, Lazon MSS.; Proskauer to Frank, Dec. 8, 1941, and Frank reply, Dec. 9, 1941; Villard to Frank, Dec. 18, 1941; Frank to Kaufman, Dec. 19, 1941; all in Box 66, Jerome Frank MSS., Sterling Library, Yale University; *New Palestine*, Dec. 12, 1941; reviews of Frank article, Box 156, Frank MSS.; Frankfurter-Frank correspondence, Dec. 1941, Box 53, Frank MSS. For Frank's extreme sensitivity to his Jewish origins, see Jerold S. Auerbach, *Rabbis and Lawyers, The Journey from Torah to Constitution* (Bloomington, 1990), pp. 159-160, 166.
- 22 Penkower, *The Holocaust and Israel Reborn*, pp. 64-65; *New York Times*, Jan. 22, 1942; Lazon to Radcliffe, Jan. 23, 1942; Lazon to Hutchinson, Feb. 2, 1942; Lazon to Tydings, Feb. 26, 1942; A. H. Sulzberger to Church, Nov. 17, 1941; I. Sulzberger to Lazon, Feb. 18, 1942; Lazon to Baerwald, Jan. 9, 1942; all in Box 3045, Lazon MSS.
- 23 *CCAR 53rd Annual Convention, Cincinnati*, 52 (1942), 169-182; Marcuson to Wolsey, May 20, 1942; Ettelson to Heller, May 20, 1942; both in Box 1446, Wolsey MSS.; Freehof to Gleuck, Mar. 27, 1942, Box 1121, Freehof MSS., AJA; Howard R. Greenstein, *Turning Point: Zionism and Reform Judaism* (Chico, 1981), pp. 37-38.
- 24 Goldenson to colleagues, Mar. 13, 1942; Box 3045, Lazon MSS.; Lazon letter to the editor, *New York Times*, Mar. 23, 1942; meeting, Mar. 30, 1942, Box 1452, Wolsey MSS.; meeting, Apr. 6, 1942, Box 3044, Lazon MSS.; Fineshriber to Kahn, Apr. 27, 1942, Box 1446, Wolsey MSS.; Schiff to Warburg, Apr. 9, 1942; Lazon to Rothschild, Apr. 23, 1942; Lazon to Welles, Mar. 13, 1942, and Apr. 29, 1942; Rothschild to Lazon, Mar. 19 and 23, 1942; all in Box 3045, Lazon MSS.; Apr. 25, 1942, Territorial Committee notes files, Isaiah Bowman MSS., Eisenhower Library, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Md.; Lazon to Wertheim, Mar. 29, 1942, Israel—Palestine Immigration 1939-56 files, AJC MSS.
- 25 Heller to members of the CCAR, Apr. 30, 1942; Freehof to Wolsey, May 1, 1942; Freehof to Heller, May 4, 1942; Freehof to Marcuson, May 11, 1942; all in Box 1121, Freehof MSS.; Cohon to Heller, May 3, 1942, file 2/3, Samuel Cohon MSS., American Jewish Archives; Heller to Wolsey, May 15, 1942; Wolsey to colleagues, May 15, 1942; both in Box 1453, Wolsey MSS.; Gerstenfeld to Wolsey, May 19, 1942, Box 1446, Wolsey MSS.

- 26 Heller to Freehof, May 27, 1942, Box 1121, Freehof MSS.; Wolsey to Brown, May 25, 1942, Box 1452, Wolsey MSS.; Wolsey to Kahn, Box 1453, Wolsey MSS.; Philipson to Wolsey, Apr. 13, 1942, Box 1448, Wolsey MSS.; Glick, *Triangular Connection*, pp. 47-48; Schachtel to Shusterman, Mar. 5, 1942, Box 1452, Wolsey MSS.; Reichert to Wolsey, Apr. 1, 1942, Box 1448, Wolsey MSS.; Cronbach to Heller, May 4, 1942; Gerstenfeld to Wolsey, May 5, 1942; both in Box 1446, Wolsey MSS. For examples of vilification, see Marcuson to Heller, May 4, 1942, Box 1121, Freehof MSS.
- 27 Lazaron to Rothschild, Apr. 23, 1942; Welles to Lazaron, Mar. 31, 1942; both in Box 3045, Lazaron MSS.; Welles to Lazaron Apr. 17, 1942, Box 80, Sumner Welles MSS., Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York; Penkower, *The Holocaust and Israel Reborn*, pp. 33-34; ZOA Executive Minutes, Apr. 26, 1942, ZA; Berger, *Memoirs of an Anti-Zionist Jew* (Beirut, 1978), p. 5; Proskauer to Berger, May 27, 1941, Box 45, American Council for Judaism (ACJ) Archives, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin; Morgenstern to Berger, May 21, 1942, Box 29, ACJ Archives.
- 28 June 1-2, 1942 conference minutes, Box 1454, Wolsey MSS.; Rabbis' statement, June 1-2, 1942, ACJ files, ZA; *Jewish Review and Observer*, July 3, 1942.
- 29 Thomas A. Kolsky, *Jews Against Zionism: The American Council for Judaism, 1942-1948* (Philadelphia, 1990), pp. 53-55; Samuel Margoshes, "News and Views," *The Day*, Aug. 15, 1942; *New York Times*, Aug. 30, 1942; Philip Bernstein *et al.*, *Zionism: An Affirmation of Judaism* (New York, 1942).
- 30 Lazaron to Wertheim, June 18, 1942, Zionist—non-Zionist conference Jan.-June 1942 file, AJC; Wertheim telephone conversation, June 18, 1942; Lazaron to Schachtel, June 25, 1942; Lazaron to Sulzberger, June 26, 1942; all in Box 3045, Lazaron MSS.; Lazaron to E. Roosevelt, July 17, 1942, Box 80, Welles MSS.
- 31 *New York Times*, June 14, 1942; Sulzberger to Lazaron, June 25, 1942, Box 3045, Lazaron MSS.; Sulzberger to Lazaron, Sept. 17, 1942, Box 3046, Lazaron MSS.
- 32 Lazaron to Strauss, Aug. 26, 1942, Box 121, Strauss-II MSS.; Berger postcards, Sept. 9, 1942, Box 3045, Lazaron MSS.; Lazaron to Magnes, Sept. 7, 1942, and reply, Oct. 6, 1942, file 234, Judah Magnes MSS., Hebrew University; Lazaron letter to *Baltimore Jewish Times*, Dec. 4, 1942; Lazaron to Rosenberg, Oct. 8, 1942, Box 3045, Lazaron MSS.; Nov. 2, 1942 meeting, Box 1452, Wolsey MSS.
- 33 *New York Times*, Nov. 6, 1942; Sulzberger to Frank, Nov. 18, 1942, Frank MSS.; Sulzberger to Lazaron, Nov. 12, 1942, Box 3045, Lazaron MSS.
- 34 Lazaron to Welles, Nov. 9, 1942, Box 3045, Lazaron MSS.; Lazaron to Welles, Nov. 10, 1942, Box 80, Welles MSS.; Sulzberger to Welles, Nov. 11, 1942, Box 84, Welles MSS.; Welles to Lazaron, Nov. 13, 1942; Lazaron to Rothschild, Nov. 19 and 20, 1942; all in Box 3045, Lazaron MSS.. For Gluckstein's views, see his correspondence with Bakstansky, June 1942, Palestine Committee minutes, Board of Deputies of British Jews' Archives, London, England.
- 35 J. Wise to Wolsey, Nov. 18, 1942, Box 3046, Lazaron MSS.
- 36 Copy of minutes of Nov. 23, 1942 meeting, Z5/733, CZA. (This document indicates that the American Zionists were privy to the proceedings.)

- 37 Lazaron to Thompson (for E. Roosevelt), Nov. 24, 1942; Lazaron to Welles, Nov. 23, 1942; both in Box 3045, Lazaron MSS.
- 38 Penkower, *The Jews Were Expendable: Free World Diplomacy and the Holocaust*, chap. 3 (Urbana, 1983); Lazaron to Wolsey, Nov. 27, 1942, Box 3044, Lazaron MSS.; Lazaron to Welles, Nov. 30, 1942, Box 80, Welles MSS.
- 39 Kolsky, *Jews Against Zionism*, p. 52; Pilchik to Lazaron, July 15, 1942, Box 1448, Wolsey MSS.; Wolsey to Lazaron, Nov. 30, 1942; Wolsey to Lazaron, Dec. 2, 1942; both in Box 3044, Lazaron MSS.
- 40 *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)*, 1942 (Washington, D.C., 1958), 4: 548; Murray to Welles, Nov. 27, 1942, 867N.01/11-2342, RG 59, SD; *FRUS*, 1942, 4: 549-50; Penkower, *The Holocaust and Israel Reborn*, pp. 119-120. Nothing came of Lazaron's proposed Anglo-American declaration. While State expressed support, the Foreign Office disapproved of its very limited reference to Arabs and its implication of continued Jewish immigration. By May 1943 Lazaron echoed the State Department—Foreign Office line. Penkower, *The Holocaust and Israel Reborn*, p. 170n17.
- 41 Meeting of Dec. 7, 1942, Box 2/1, ACJ collection, AJA.
- 42 Lazaron statement, *JTA*, Jan. 29, 1943.
- 43 Morgenstern to Wolsey, Jan. 8, 1943, Box 1448, Wolsey MSS.; Shaw to Wolsey, Dec. 1, 1942, Box 3044, Lazaron MSS.; Shusterman to Wolsey, Dec. 6 and 24, 1942, Box 1449, Wolsey MSS.; Wolsey-Holtzberg memo, Jan. 25, 1943, Box 3045, Lazaron MSS.; Greenstein, *Turning Point*, p. 45 and chap. 3. While the anti-Zionist clique on the American Jewish Committee executive board triumphed with Proskauer's election as president, they and their colleagues agreed upon a declaration which pointedly asserted that Palestine would not furnish "the solution of the problem of post-war Jewish rehabilitation" and called for the country to be placed under an international trusteeship, ultimately becoming "a self-governing Commonwealth." "Statement of Principles," Dec. 6, 1942, AJC Archives (adopted Jan. 31, 1943, at the AJC's annual meeting).
- 44 Freehof to Baron, Nov. 2, 1942, Box 1121, Freehof MSS.; Rosenbloom to Lazaron, Dec. 28, 1942; Berger to Lazaron, Jan. 2, 1943; both in Box 6044, Lazaron MSS.; Greenstein, *Turning Point*, p. 46.
- 45 Guttman to Lazaron, Jan. 28, 1943, Box 3045, Lazaron MSS.; Levinthal to Landman, Apr. 9, 1943, Box 1447, Wolsey MSS.; Polish, "The Changing and the Constant," 296, 302; Penkower, *The Holocaust and Israel Reborn*, pp. 44-6. A sympathetic portrayal of ACJ activities after its formation is offered in Kolsky, *Jews Against Zionism*, chaps. 4-7.
- 46 Polish, "The Changing and the Constant," 297. For similar developments in the British Jewish community during these same years, see Gideon Shimoni, "Selig Brodetsky and the Ascendancy of Zionism in Anglo-Jewry (1939-1945)," *The Jewish Journal of Sociology*, 22 (1980): 125-161.

The Jewish Times of Arthur Hays Sulzberger

I

DESPITE FREEZING GUSTS AND THE SEASON'S FIRST SNOWFALL IN New York City, more than 1,000 people filed through the Romanesque portals of Temple Emanu-El on the afternoon of December 15, 1968, to pay their last respects to Arthur Hays Sulzberger. The seventy-seven-year-old chairman of the board of the *New York Times*, who died in his sleep four days earlier after a long illness, had just marked his fiftieth anniversary on the staff of the world's most influential newspaper. Publisher of the *Times* from 1935, following the death of his father-in-law, Adolph S. Ochs, until 1961, Sulzberger could rightly have been gratified that in these same years circulation rose 40 per cent and Sunday circulation nearly doubled. Its staff (the largest in the world) had grown to 5,750, including 900 in the news and editorial departments. Hewing to Ochs' ideal that the news be reported "without fear or favor," Sulzberger had at the same time seen to it that specialized subjects such as science, labor, and aviation receive extensive coverage; considerable space be given to an analysis of events; more photographs be featured; food and fashion departments, as well as a woman's page, be introduced; and editorials present a decisive point of view in the face of economic depression, global conflict, and constant challenges to freedom. Thanks in no small measure to his stewardship at the 229 West 43rd St. headquarters, the *Times* had taken on, as Sulzberger himself once put it, "the atmosphere of an institution."¹

Even before Temple Emanu-El hosted the memorial service, tributes poured in from leaders in various fields. "His death diminishes us all," declared Vice President Hubert Humphrey; New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller hailed this "champion of truth and objectivity, a source of inspiration to both young and old, and a humanitarian with the highest sense of civic responsibility." UN Secretary General U Thant cabled Arthur "Punch" Sulzberger, who had become publisher five years earlier, to convey his "deep grief" at the passing of "your distinguished father and an outstanding American"; UN Under Secretary Ralph Bunche noted that the deceased was above all "a man of great goodwill." Chief executives of prominent newspapers across the country, as well as in

England, France, Germany, Japan, and Korea, praised Sulzberger's integrity, vision, and commitment to excellence. Officials of Columbia University, which he had served as a trustee for fourteen years and in whose honor the new library of the graduate school of journalism was named, saluted his courage, compassion, humor, and gracious modesty. Concluded John Hohenberg, secretary of the advisory board on the Pulitzer Prize, which had bestowed 23 awards to individual writers on the *Times* and 4 to the newspaper itself during Sulzberger's tenure as publisher: the influence of "one of the giants of American journalism" would be felt "for many years to come."²

Jewish institutions conveyed their condolences in like vein. Rabbi Arthur J. Lelyveld, president of the American Jewish Congress, observed that Sulzberger's honesty, love of democracy, and "devotion to a free press and a free nation set an example for generations of newspapermen to follow at home and around the world." The Reform movement's lay Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC) observed that his "deep commitment to the moral and spiritual tenets of his people, his wisdom and beneficients [*sic*] were sources of strength for us all." The Federation of Jewish Philanthropies extolled "a good friend, who throughout his lifetime championed the cause of social justice for all"; the Jewish Theological Seminary of America recorded with grief the passing of this honorary alumnus, who had served on its board "with distinction" for three years. Temple Emanu-El, which claimed Sulzberger as a lifelong member and a trustee from 1935-1955, expressed its gratitude for his "wise counsel," "deep concern," and "generous support," rejoicing that the metropolis's first Reform house of worship was able to share along with other institutions in New York City "the benefits of his fine mind and generous spirit."³

The memorial service began at 4 p.m., ten minutes after the arrival of President-elect Richard M. Nixon, with a mixed choir, accompanied by organ, singing Schubert's arrangement of the 23rd Psalm, "The Lord is My Shepherd." Then, after Senior Rabbi Nathan A. Perilman recited Psalms 91, 121, and 15 from a pulpit donated by Mr. and Mrs. Adolph Ochs, the choir sang Handel's "In Thee O Lord Have I Trusted." James "Scotty" Reston, executive editor of the *Times*, acknowledged Sulzberger's "rare good judgment, unfailing human consideration, and a remarkable combination of seriousness and merriness." In keeping with the publisher's expressed instructions five years earlier, which included no Mozart, morbidity, flowers, or an elaborate casket, Reston reminisced over Sulzberger's abilities as poet, cartoonist, story-teller, amateur painter, interior decorator, drink mixer, and furniture mover. His tribute ended

with an appreciation of the deceased's reverence to the tradition of the *Times* alongside a "fearlessness of revision." Rabbi Perilman then said a short prayer and, after the audience rose, intoned the ancient Kaddish in Aramaic and Hebrew, followed by English translation. The ceremony ended with the choir, unseen in the loft above the Ark, singing "Hear My Prayer" composed by Lazar Saminsky, the late musical director of the temple.⁴

Throughout the 32-minute memorial, the family, headed by widow Iphigene, her son and three daughters, maintained their legendary composure while sitting in dim light before the bright altar. Only granddaughter Susan Dryfoos broke down, recalling her own father's funeral under the same Gothic flying buttresses and Moorish towers at 65th Street and 5th Avenue five years before. Among the dignitaries in the pews to their right were the presidents of Gimbel Brothers, Inc., the Radio Corporation of America, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, and Chase Manhattan Bank. The Lieutenant Governor of California, two former presidents of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and top executives of the *Times* were joined by the vice president of the Council on Foreign Relations, the president of the American Council for Judaism, and the executive director of the National Urban League. Prominent lawyers, together with city and state politicians, also received mention in the newspaper's subsequent account, which observed that both Nixon and Governor Rockefeller spoke briefly to members of the Sulzberger clan before walking along the red carpeting out onto the slippery streets.⁵

Two personal requests, made in conjunction with the brief service, were noteworthy. The family asked that instead of flowers, friends send donations to the New York Times Neediest Cases Fund, an annual charitable appeal which Ochs, the late father-in-law, had begun, and which the husband of his only child had then spearheaded in a first apprenticeship as the assistant to the newspaper's general manager. Far more markedly, no coffin rested on the marble altar beneath Temple Emanu-El's stained glass windows. Years earlier, Sulzberger's drafted and redrafted instructions had made it clear that he desired to be placed in a plain pine box in the clothes he was wearing at the time of his death. Counter to Jewish tradition, he wanted the body to be cremated. The ashes, he wrote, should be interred "without ceremony" in the underground vault at Temple Israel Cemetery in Westchester County, in front of the Ochs mausoleum. On December 12, 1968, these wishes were carried out to the letter.⁶

II

It had all begun in a three-story, red brick brownstone on Manhattan's West 120th St., opposite Mount Morris Park, where Rachel Peixotto Hays Sulzberger delivered Sulzberger into the world on September 12, 1891. His mother, a sixth-generation descendant of Sephardic Jews who had come from Holland to America's shores in 1695, maintained a fierce ancestral pride. The armed service of a third-generation Hays in the colonial struggle against Great Britain having qualified her to join the Daughters of the American Revolution, Rachel Hays became a DAR member in the conviction that people should be aware that Jews had been part of America from the beginning and had joined in the fight for independence. Sulzberger agreed, insisting that he always be identified as a Hays and that his son, like himself, join the Sons of the American Revolution when he came of age. Another of Sulzberger's maternal ancestors, Benjamin Mendes Seixas, had served as rabbi of Newport's Sephardic Hebrew Synagogue (later named Touro Synagogue), and it was to him that George Washington directly addressed the famous letter of 1790 about upholding toleration in the newly established United States.⁷

Rachel's family thought it beneath her to marry Cyrus L. Sulzberger in 1884, and her father let his personal sentiments be known by never pronouncing that German name properly. A descendant of Ashkenazic Jews from the Bavarian Palatinate who reached Philadelphia in the mid-nineteenth century, Sulzberger's father rose from bookkeeper to president of an established New York cotton goods firm by 1902. During that same time, the hard-working Cyrus devoted himself to Jewish causes, such as helping to found the *American Hebrew* newspaper to revitalize American Jewish life; persuading William Dean Howells to remove a questionable antisemitic passage from *Silas Lapham*; publicly insisting that his people's separate "tribal bond" enabled it to propagate the message of monotheism to all humanity; heading the United Hebrew Charities; and backing the multi-volume *Jewish Encyclopedia*.⁸

Deeply concerned about the seamier aspects of tenement life on New York's Lower East Side, congested by the arrival of East European Jews since the turn of the century, Cyrus also helped establish the Industrial Removal Office and then served for five years as its president. While seeking to resettle these new immigrants throughout the country, Cyrus publicly defended further entry as confirming America's "most glorious heritage" of affording a welcome to every individual searching for liberty or striving for opportunity. Concomitantly, Cyrus convinced the board of New York City's Mt. Sinai

Hospital to set up a kosher kitchen on the argument that the traditionally observant Russian Jews “who are now coming to our hospital may not get well as quickly as we would like if they have to eat *treife*.”⁹

The savage Kishinev pogrom of April 1903, which sparked both world protest and a mass flight of Jews from Russia, thrust Cyrus L. Sulzberger into new activism. Together with German-born Jewish magnates Oscar Straus and Jacob Schiff, the New Yorker raised a relief fund of \$100,000 within two weeks for survivors in the stricken Bessarabian capital, a quarter of the total sum collected worldwide. In October 1905, antisemitic attacks across more than 300 Russian communities, encouraged by Czar Nicholas I, galvanized the earlier trio to work in tandem with British Jewish leaders for a far more intense popular drive. Under Cyrus’s direction, the National Committee for Relief of Sufferers by Russian Massacres collected an estimated \$4 million and distributed it abroad. Realizing that hatred of Jews would not disappear in Russia, that American diplomatic action proved uncertain, and that a permanent organization was needed to aid in the acculturation of East European Jewry, he and like-minded patricians of German background formed the American Jewish Committee by the end of 1906. Its mission, they declared, was to “prevent infringement of the civil and religious rights of Jews and to alleviate the consequences of persecution.”¹⁰

Kishinev also convinced Sulzberger’s father to embrace the Zionist movement headed by Theodor Herzl, and to attend the Sixth Zionist Congress in August 1903. Herzl’s dramatic appeal in Basle to accept the British government’s offer of Uganda in East Africa as “an answer to Kishinev” and “only an auxiliary colonization,” with Palestine remaining the cause’s unchanged goal, received Cyrus’s approval. Five years earlier, at a meeting of prominent local rabbis and congregational presidents held at New York City’s Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue, She’arith Israel, he had opposed the formation of a Jewish state in Palestine; it might cast doubt, declared the majority resolution, “upon the citizenship, patriotism and loyalty of Jews in whatever country they reside,” while “the true mission of Judaism is religious and not political.” “What sort of a government could one expect of a country governed by those who come from Russia, Bulgaria, etc.,” wondered Sulzberger at the time, insisting that he had “no desire for Jerusalem.”

Now he urged that a commission of inquiry be sent to East Africa. Continued Jewish immigration to the Western countries represented a menace to the future security of Jews already established there, he asserted, and no great power would again “lift a finger on our behalf” if England’s good-will

were rejected. "More than I am a Zionist I am a Jew and a man," read the official record of his remarks at the Congress, "and when the lives of fellow men are in danger, it should be our first duty to rescue them by any means in our power." His fellow American delegates split in the final vote to dispatch a commission, four joining Cyrus in favor to two opposed.¹¹

This pronounced shift on his part found eloquent expression a half year later in "Patriotism and Zionism," a published essay which Cyrus had actually written to his son Arthur, whom he had taken to the Sixth Zionist Congress. If it were patriotic to go to war against Spain for the sake of the republic of Cuba in 1898, argued the new vice president of the Federation of American Zionists, how could it be unpatriotic "to make peaceable and purely moral propaganda in behalf of the state of Judea?" "The wandering of the homeless nation" had continued for "far too long"; given "the capital offenses which for 2,000 years have been inflicted by the nations upon Israel," the world needed the state which "is pre-eminently fitted to be among states what its people have been among peoples – the exponents of justice, of morals, of righteousness." One month after Herzl's death of a heart attack in July 1904, Cyrus recalled the profound impression that this "Prince of Israel" had made upon him in Basle, noting for *The Maccabean* the leader's ideal bearing, astounding range of mind, tremendous power as a debater, and singular ability to win back the anti-Uganda Russian delegates from secession. Time alone would tell, his reminiscence closed, upon whose shoulders Herzl's mantle would fall and whether there would be shoulders capable of carrying it.¹²

Herzl's demise and the split in Zionist ranks over the East Africa project, from which the British ultimately retreated, led Sulzberger's father to follow the famed British author Israel Zangwill out of the Zionist movement in 1905. Zangwill, who had given Herzl the first opportunity to describe his political philosophy to a London audience in November 1895 and strongly supported the Uganda offer, departed to establish the Jewish Territorial Organization. Its efforts to create a large Jewish haven in some country that need not necessarily be Palestine found a sympathetic ear in Cyrus L. Sulzberger and others of the American Jewish Committee, including Straus, Judge Mayer Sulzberger (a cousin and the Committee president), and Daniel Guggenheim. They formed an American branch, which focused on Mesopotamia, historical birthplace of the biblical patriarch Abraham and strategically located between Africa and Asia.¹³

Not surprisingly, Cyrus and most colleagues on the American Jewish Committee staunchly opposed the formation of a democratically elected and

pro-Zionist American Jewish Congress during World War I. From a similar perspective, the Committee officially expressed “whole-hearted sympathy” to those Jews whose yearnings for “a home in the Holy Land” would be met by Great Britain’s Balfour Declaration in 1917, especially as that statement of policy had made it clear that nothing would be done (in the Committee’s words) to prejudice the rights of “the greater number” of Jews worldwide, including those who “established a permanent home” in the United States, or of “existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine.” This middle-of-the-road position met with the acceptance of Cyrus, whose faith in enlightened harmony between countries had been so jolted by the outbreak of World War I that he became a strong pacifist. The emphasis on nationalism (particularly the Zionist variety) was a serious error, he decided. “Every time you make a new frontier,” he would say, “you make a new battle line.”¹⁴ The argument greatly influenced his son Arthur.

Arthur Hays Sulzberger’s initiation into what he would later privately term the “difficult business of being a Jew” came when, on his way to P.S. 166, a man passed him and said, “Hello, are you a Sheeny?” When he got home, the innocent eight-year-old asked his mother about the meaning of the word, and his education in prejudice began. Yet a life of privilege sheltered him from additional anti-Jewish manifestations while he attended Horace Mann before entering Columbia College at the age of eighteen, and he was brought up with some understanding of the Jewish faith. Arthur’s parents had gradually foresworn all religious observance before then, and it was only when their oldest son, Leo, asked them why they could not say prayers the way his cousin Ed Hays did that the young parents decided to join a Reform synagogue until their children were grown and could decide for themselves. Arthur celebrated a bar mitzvah and fasted on Yom Kippur. Cyrus would actually find comfort in the Orthodox She’arith Israel congregation nearby, but the independent-minded Rachel had no desire to return to the fold.¹⁵

In an undated letter, handwritten at a late hour on his mother’s stationary, Arthur defined for Cyrus his innermost feelings about Judaism and what he characterized as a personal “state of religious anarchy.” Perfectly willing to deify by calling “god” his inability to comprehend creation out of nothing and existence for all time, he added a sense of “civic responsibilities – a mode of life – a code of morals” to what he termed his religion. Any other type of faith would be for him “a sign of weakness,” the shifting of responsibility from his shoulders to that of a greater power. Arthur did not expect his father to be converted to “my probably foolish zeal of youth,” but wished to think that Cyrus

understood why he judged “distasteful” prayers and communal worship along established lines. He was “truly grateful” for having been born a Jew because of the “rich inheritance” that he received thereby, profiting from the prejudice which he knew existed but which fortunately had not often touched him. It had tended to make him more aggressive, more alert, more broadminded and tolerant, which is why he deemed it a privilege to “stand up and be counted” as a Jew. He concluded with affection: “I have a Jewish feeling, a Jewish religion. Must I take what for me is a step backwards in order to show it?”¹⁶

Such convictions underwent no metamorphosis between his stay at Columbia and when he first entered Ochs’s employ in 1918. Although the handsome but indifferent engineering student was rejected by the undergraduate fraternities because of his background, he refused to become a charter member of the Zeta Beta Tau Jewish fraternity, saying that he refused to admit “that religion was a basis for social contact.” He argued heatedly with one of the founders of the Herzl Zion Club, and at one point declared in exasperation to his adversary: “If what you say is so, I will resign from the Jewish people.” Upon graduation, Arthur worked for three years in his father’s textile firm, then enlisted (Cyrus’s pacifism notwithstanding) as a second lieutenant in the Officers Reserve Corps soon after the United States’s entry into World War I. As a consequence, through Julius Ochs Adler, a fellow lieutenant who was also Adolph Ochs’s nephew, he renewed a college friendship with Iphigene Ochs. Iphigene accepted his second proposal of marriage; her father grudgingly consented on the condition that Arthur join the staff of the *Times*. A few months after the wedding in November 1917, the war ended. The greatly disappointed officer of field artillery never having seen action overseas, he now entered the ranks of the Fourth Estate.¹⁷

The *New York Times*, which Ochs had acquired at the age of thirty-eight in 1896, unquestionably reflected the publisher’s particular values. Anxious as were other German-Jewish immigrants to prove that energy and rectitude could bring prominence and success in an overwhelmingly Gentile America, Ochs had fashioned its columns to reflect probity (he coined the *Times*’ slogan “All the News That’s Fit to Print”), patriotism, and the sanctity of property. He did not take umbrage that it was called an “old fog-ist” newspaper, convinced that “an ‘old-fogy’ sometimes contributes a good deal in preventing too sudden a transition from old and established methods to new, untried or dangerous experiments.” By the time Sulzberger signed on, the stodgy, thorough, and respectable “Good Gray Lady” had been transformed into the forum of the establishment. Viewing the paper’s becoming an apologist in the nineteen-

twenties for the scandals of the Harding administration and its according slim coverage of the Sacco-Vanzetti case and the Scopes Monkey Trial, *Nation* proprietor Oswald Garrison Villard sneered that the secret of Ochs's success was "his unending devotion to the God of things as they are."¹⁸

Caution became especially pronounced over any matter relating to Jews. Given Ochs's unceasing anxiety lest his paper be considered "The Jew Times," no Jew became managing editor or achieved status as a major editor or leading correspondent under his tenure. In 1913, his "rules for guidance" to all *Times* staffers announced that the application of the word "Jew" or "Jewish" to any individual – just as was the case for "Catholic" or "Protestant" – was to be avoided "unless from the context it is necessary to call attention to his religion." Ochs forbade the mounting of any crusade after the newspaper's defense of Leo Frank, an Atlanta Jew falsely accused of rape and lynched in 1915 by a Southern mob, brought hate mail to the publisher's office; Ochs fell into a prolonged state of depression as a consequence of the attacks. The *Times* opposed the appointment to the U.S. Supreme Court of Louis Dembitz Brandeis, a liberal, an ardent Zionist, and the first Jew to be accorded that judicial honor. When Russia refused to honor the passports of American citizens who were Jews, the *Times* did not protest and the word "Jew" was absent from its reportage and editorials. Pogroms in Poland after World War I likewise received sanitized coverage, including the statement that the situation would "abate when peace has been restored and the presence of foreigners in their country will shame the Poles into more civilized treatment of their near neighbors."¹⁹

Wariness and blandness were not in evidence, however, whenever the *Times* had to confront the issue of Zionism. As soon as Herzl's revolutionary cause emerged full-blown in 1897, Ochs invited Isaac Mayer Wise, the founder of American Reform Judaism and the publisher's father-in-law, to respond. Wise reiterated his own movement's Pittsburgh Platform of 1885, which had stressed that "we consider ourselves no longer a nation but a religious community," and dismissed the First Zionist Congress as "a farce, a crazy antic of irresponsible men." The *Times* had not one good word years later for the Balfour Declaration: its sole editorial reaction expressed the fear that the historic pronouncement might lead to a recurrence of antisemitism, and, further, that "multitudes of Orthodox Jews still cherish the belief that the return to Zion is to be preceded by the coming of Elijah, and among these there is either indifference to the proposed establishment of the Jewish state, or doubt as to the wisdom of the movement." In 1922, when Henry Cabot Lodge (R-Mass.) successfully introduced a congressional resolution favoring a

Jewish homeland in Palestine, the *Times* charged that the senator's action was a blatant effort to attract Jewish votes in his upcoming electoral race.²⁰

"Religion is all that I stand for as a Jew," emphasized Ochs at the laying of the cornerstone of Temple Beth El in Glen Falls, N.Y., in 1925. Not surprisingly, his newspaper gave a disproportionate amount of space to the deliberations of rabbinical conferences and to clerical sermons compared with that given to the secular, cultural, or national activities of Jews. Yet, as was prevalent among Reform Jews of the time, Ochs celebrated Christmas with a decorated tree, and never held a Passover seder. He happily contributed \$10,000 and a pair of magnificent altar candlesticks to the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, and was disturbed to have a prominent Englishwoman criticize him, during a trip to Palestine in 1922, for not ruling out intermarriage. (Ochs's brother, Milton, married a Presbyterian, and Milton's children were raised in that faith.) In sending his subscription of \$25,000 to a Jewish fund for the relief of Jews in war-torn Europe, Ochs insisted that it not be called a Jewish fund or be confined to contributions from Jews, since he considered it the cause of common humanity. This was consistent with the words of his late father, Julius, inscribed over the doors to the Mizpah Congregation in Chattanooga, which Adolph and his wife Iphigenia ("Effie") had donated in his honor: "Worship God, not alone in forms and ceremonies, but also by a virtuous life – by the practice of charity and benevolence."²¹

In Sulzberger's judgment, Ochs' firm belief that "freedom spelled responsibility" was a religious conception, the decency and regard for the rights of others that were exemplified in Ochs's business and private life making his father-in-law "a good Jew." Arthur and Iphigene similarly raised their three children to believe, as daughter Marian recalled, that they were "first Americans," with Judaism their religion – "never that we were Jews *per se*." No religious observances were actually held at home, but Christmas served as the occasion to give birthday presents to all family members. Their son realized that he was Jewish only when he went away to boarding school and faced antisemitic hazing. In time, "Punch," following the example of his sister Ruth, would marry out of the faith. Cyrus, who died in 1932, had once told his son that aside from the fact that intermarriage added "one weighty problem" to the many problems of matrimony, he found no objection to it. Arthur subsequently confessed to Simon Strunsky, author of the column "Topics of the Times," that he had the same feeling. To marry a non-Jew for the purpose of avoiding what he termed "the Jewish problem" would, "in addition to being stupid, be reprehensible." But, he added, "I should hate to feel that religion

itself played any part in preventing what might otherwise be a happy union.”²²

Unable to avoid his Jewishness fully before becoming publisher of the *Times*, Sulzberger responded with ambivalence. Once turned away in front of his family by a Cape Cod hotel clerk who refused to honor his reservation because he was Jewish, Sulzberger directed the newspaper to publish henceforth advertisements for businesses which included words like “restricted” and “selected clientele.” (The practice, which he rationalized on the ground that Jews should be forewarned of bias so they need not be humiliated as he had, would continue until the District Attorney for New York County informed him in 1943 that it was illegal.) As for Zionism, the 1929 Arab riots in Palestine soon elicited from his pen an unpublished draft which admitted that he would dislike living in such “a strictly Jewish community” as Jerusalem: “Having been made responsible for all Jews by being continually classified with them, I find myself particularly sensitive to their shortcomings.” Sulzberger would not deny the right to any Jew needing shelter “in the spot which he has literally referred to as his promised land, day after day, since he was able to speak.” Yet, he ended, what higher mission could the Jewish people desire than to fulfill what could be found everywhere in their prayerbooks, to be “a messenger of peace among the nations of the earth?”²³

Adolf Hitler’s assumption of power as Germany’s Chancellor in January 1933 sent Ochs into yet another severe depression. He realized sooner than most (including Iphigene and Arthur) that the cultivated society of his forebears had violently rejected what he once fondly recalled as “the better days” before World War I, when he had purchased a bell for the village church near Frankfurt where his wife’s grandfather had once lived. Yet the publisher refused to abandon the belief that the condemnation of Third Reich policies should embrace “all creeds and races, who believe in liberty, equality and fraternity.” The situation, he wrote UAHC president Max Vogelstein, involved the Jewish problem throughout the world, “and we must move cautiously.” Ochs made an unprecedented decision: All letters to the editor of the *Times* concerning Hitler would be banned, since the paper’s traditional policy as an open forum would mandate printing letters received in favor of “the barbaric government.” Feeling “helpless and almost hopeless,” Ochs left that autumn for his fifty-seven acre Hillandale estate in White Plains, rarely appearing in public thereafter.²⁴

Sulzberger, becoming the effective publisher, trod gingerly as well. Antisemitic actions throughout Germany were reported in stories, buried inside the *Times*, which often quoted “hothead” extremists like Julius Streicher

and Heinrich Himmler; Hitler was portrayed as the bulwark against disorder, with internal stabilization on the way. Sulzberger requested the American Jewish Congress not to have his name used as one of the sponsors for a 1934 trial of Hitler at Madison Square Garden, although the trial would be adequately reported because it was “picturesque and colorful” news. When a London correspondent of the *Times* wondered, in turn, if the paper had not “swung a bit too far for its own good and for the good of the Jews in the U.S.,” Sulzberger replied that of the groups affected by the Hitler regime, only Jews “cannot hide.” There had been “far too much” news of Jews in the *Times*, but “too much has happened to the Jews throughout the world.” He was an American with roots and blood in this soil for many generations; no group could represent him as a Jew. Yet he worried that agitation stirred up by the American Jewish Congress would “help to destroy me,” likely making even persons “as fortunately situated as I” the target of antisemitism. Understandably, Sulzberger attempted to steer *Fortune* magazine away from an article linking Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Jr., the Jews, and the *Times* – without success.²⁵

What he characterized as the “disturbances” in Germany made Sulzberger feel more than ever that the Zionist solution was “the wrong idea.” The position of the Jew in Poland, he wrote Nathan Straus of the American Palestine Campaign in April 1933, was infinitely better than it would have been had Palestine the capacity to hold them all, and had the United States not imposed a restriction on immigration. The nations of the world, he emphasized, had to be made to realize that the Jew within their borders was a native citizen entitled to all the rights of such citizenship. By contrast, “the more that Palestine becomes a reality, just so much more weight is lent to the statement that the Jew in other lands is a foreigner.” Hence his request of a friend, banker Lewis L. Strauss (who pronounced his own name “Straws” to make himself sound less Jewish), to help him finance a study to locate a place other than Palestine which might lend itself to colonizing German Jews, much as Cyrus had contributed much over many years to Zangwill’s organization. The adamantly anti-Zionist Strauss, later to sound out London’s interest in establishing a “United States of Africa” to aid Jews and other European refugees, readily did so.²⁶

Upon Hitler’s ascension, Ochs had told Iphigene that “this will lead to a second world war.” Certain that “there must be an end” to the Third Reich, he continued to be “most apprehensive” of what would happen preceding the removal of that regime. Fortunately, Ochs did not have to see his worst

nightmares realized. On April 8, 1935, shortly after visiting his *Chattanooga Times* plant, he died of a cerebral hemorrhage. Four days later, following a funeral service in Temple Emanu-El, Ochs was buried in the mausoleum he had built in Temple Israel Cemetery, just a short distance from Hillandale. New York City's flags flew at half-staff at the order of Mayor Fiorello La Guardia. All work stopped at the *Times* when the funeral service began; the teletype machines of the Associated Press, the United Press, and other international wire services fell silent for a moment. A formal vote of the three trustees of the Ochs Trust (Arthur, Iphigene, and Julius Ochs Adler, who became general manager), which he had created in his will to serve as the controlling owner of the *Times*, took place one month later. Unanimously, Arthur Hays Sulzberger received official appointment as the president and publisher of the *New York Times*.²⁷ At last he was out of Ochs's shadow; his hour had arrived.

III

Sulzberger assumed the helm, as his wife later put it aptly, "with a firm but cautious hand." For one year, he made no substantial changes of policy, personnel or contracts. Then, without haste, he backed a new section called "News of the Week in Review." The expensive rotogravure section was merged with the Sunday magazine; more photographs and display headings were used; pay increases rewarded good work. Daily luncheons in Sulzberger's private dining room on the eleventh floor of the *Times*' headquarters featured off-the-record talks with important rulers and policy-makers in every sphere. The quality of foreign reporting was considerably improved, and star correspondent Anne O'Hare McCormick became the first woman to join the editorial staff. Editorials no longer stood aloof from the fray, such as the newspaper's steady critique of the plan of President Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR) for enlarging the membership of the Supreme Court on the grounds that it would upset the balance of power on which American democracy had been founded. Convinced after a trip to Europe in early 1938 that a world war was coming, Sulzberger defied current isolationism and rising domestic antisemitism in publishing a lengthy editorial that June which called for American intervention in the global struggle between democracy and dictatorship.²⁸

Like Ochs, however, Sulzberger and his fellow trustees continued to be skittish about highlighting Jewish talent on the *Times*. When, for example, a rare byline was bestowed on Abraham H. Raskin, his name was shortened

to "A.H. Raskin." Arthur Krock, who would be awarded a record number of Pulitzers for distinguished reporting, thought that he had been passed over because of his Jewish surname when the prestigious post of editorial page editor became vacant. "It's a family enterprise," Sulzberger replied, "and we've never put a Jew in the showcase." Krock pointed out that his mother was not a Jew (he was a proper Episcopalian), which by Jewish law made him a Gentile. The publisher retorted: "Arthur, how do you know that if you aren't Jewish?"²⁹

Believing that Jews were not members of a "race" but only of a faith, Sulzberger insisted that they should be viewed in their diversity. He consistently opposed usage in the *Times* of collective phrases such as "the Jewish people." When the UAHC and the Reform Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) created a committee in 1936 to draft a policy on domestic social welfare, he quickly warned the lay body's president Robert Goldman that "the least desirable thing we could accomplish would be to give the impression that Jews were united in anything except their religious belief." A year later, he urged Goldman to protest the CCAR's formal denunciation of the Fascists in Spain and the British effort to limit Jewish immigration into Palestine, the rabbis' opposition to any attempt to balance the federal budget at the expense of social service and work relief, and their approval of a housing bill and the U.S. Supreme Court's validation of the National Labor Relations Act: "This is not a question of washing dirty linen in public, but rather of publicly demonstrating that Jews do not think alike." Admitting that he was being "somewhat extreme," Sulzberger also insisted that the UAHC, a religious institution, should keep the two questions of religion and Jewish refugees "separate and distinct."³⁰

Nor did he think it wise to have a "Jewish seat" on the Supreme Court. When Justice Benjamin Cardozo died in mid-1938, Sulzberger opposed the nomination of Felix Frankfurter. While happy to have a Jew appointed to the Court, he thought it would be "a great mistake" to name a Jew to replace a Jew as though one place, and one place only, was assigned to Jews. The same held true for a Catholic succeeding a Catholic. At the time, Sulzberger informed his friend Jacob Billikopf that while rumors of his leading a delegation to see FDR on this issue were false, he had shared his anxiety with Henry Morgenthau, Sr. along with the reason that the public supposed Frankfurter to be "the brains" of FDR's New Deal domestic program. Hearing this from Billikopf, Frankfurter replied that "the Sulzberger episode" was deeply significant in reflecting that prominent American Jews were "unwittingly embracing Hitlerism by actually sponsoring a position of political inferiority and second-rate citizenship for

Jews." In fact, Roosevelt followed his own course and selected Frankfurter, who quickly received an enthusiastic confirmation by Congress.³¹

The shocking treatment of Jews under the swastika after Germany's *Anschluss* of Austria in March, 1938, did not alter Sulzberger's deepest convictions. He could not subscribe to the thesis that "all Jews are brothers," he told an interviewer from the *Omaha Jewish Press*, for when he joined the U.S. Army he was prepared to shoot a German Jew in the same way that he would a German Catholic or a German Protestant. Further, he was inclined to believe that Mussolini was correct when he warned Jews in Italy against becoming Zionists as long as Zionism was part of British imperial policy, which conflicted with Italian interests. If a Jewish State were ever to be set up in Palestine, it would raise the question of "whether or not I should continue to be a Jew." Required to act "as an American and not as a Jew," he could not support a boycott that Jews were spearheading against German goods, as this might well induce a desperate Hitler to go to war. One week later, a *Times* editorial concluded: "In our day's mighty struggle, there are no Jews and no Gentiles. There are only those who love freedom and those who do not."³²

Even after the savagery of *Kristallnacht* across the Third Reich, the *Times* claimed that the refugee situation "is not essentially a Jewish problem," not even a "German problem," but one which required pioneering international action. One country, including the United States, "with millions of its own people unemployed," could not be expected to perform again "the historic service it has previously performed in giving unlimited refuge to the victims of political and religious persecution." Refugees should be resettled, the editorial went on, in a sparsely populated colony, where they could carve out "a new civilization in a jungle or a wasteland." Tacitly accepting his own nation's restrictive immigration quotas, Sulzberger had earlier agreed with the Foreign Policy Association's Raymond Buell that the Evian Conference on Refugees, convened the previous July by FDR following American public protest at German atrocities against Jews, erred in not developing a policy of "moving surplus population everywhere."³³

Where and what policy, the publisher of the *Times* had no idea, but he continued to maintain a visceral hostility regarding Palestine for the Jews. After a first visit there in early 1937, he had written a private memorandum explaining why he never felt "so much a foreigner" after traveling pretty well over the face of the earth "as in this Holy Land." He was a Jew religiously, Palestine's Jews "racially and nationally." In any emotional conflict to arise between America and Palestine, "I must choose America, even if that were to

mean that I can no longer be a Jew." Since the Arabs "have a legitimate case" and "are taking a full measure from it throughout the world," he advocated that the Jewish population (then 30 percent of the total), having "enriched" the land, be increased to 40 percent. Unrestricted immigration "would be the height of folly," for Palestine "is and will always be unable to absorb the Jewish population of the world." As for the much larger issue at hand, "countries with large Jewish populations must be made to realize that they face the alternative of living with their Jews, or killing them either spiritually or physically."³⁴

Sulzberger's proposal, based upon his meeting in Palestine with former Temple Emanu-El rabbi and now Hebrew University president Judah Magnes, was spelled out in a long *Times* editorial that July. Rejecting the partition solution of Great Britain's Royal Commission headed by Lord Peel, the newspaper charged that division of the country into two states was defeatist, not solving Arab-Jewish friction but only serving British interests. Open immigration would intensify conflict in Palestine, which could never support all Jews from countries like Poland and Rumania, and would block the entry of Jews into other Arab lands. The *Times* offered its alternative: an adequately British-enforced ten-year truce, at which time the Jews would reach 40 percent of the population, offered a better chance for Arab-Jewish conciliation than if "the sharp sword of partition falls upon their common land." Ten days later, the *Times* published Magnes's full response to the Peel Commission, a reply which "thrilled and heartened" Sulzberger.³⁵

Behind the scenes, he proceeded to take a strong anti-Zionist stand. Until the political situation was settled along the lines which he believed essential, Sulzberger refused even to contribute to a memorial concert at the Metropolitan Opera House to raise funds for a Gershwin concert hall in Jerusalem: Any assistance to Palestine, he reasoned, "is like giving support to women and children behind the lines, an act which automatically released food for the men on the battle line." He persuaded associates on the UAHC executive committee, which had in early 1937 urged all Jews to unite towards the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, not to support a Palestine Pavilion at the 1939 World's Fair on the grounds that "we should not go out of our way to make propaganda for Jewish nationalism." When the British White Paper of May 1939 drastically limited the migration of Jews to Palestine to 75,000 within the next five years and projected an independent state there having an Arab majority, the *Times* editorialized that the imposed settlement would "save the homeland itself from overpopulation as well as from an increasingly violent resistance on the part of the Arabs," particularly

in the event of war. Instead, it highlighted British Guiana as a haven.³⁶

After visiting Sulzberger for lunch in March 1939, Lord Rothschild of London suggested that it would be better for the leaders of Jewry to take a more militant attitude, rather than pretend that no Jewish problem existed. In his view, they should deliver a frank message in public: "We are in the minority and each of us feels he is a problem. To be a problem is not to be a human being. Either therefore inform us that you wish to liquidate us, or accept us in perpetuity." The *Times's* publisher, in reply, wondered "what is a Jewish leader?," and refused to accept the word "Jew" as "a common denominator" for anything other than his religious life. He opposed Jewish philanthropy, Jewish war veterans associations, Jewish fraternities and colleges, and Jewish social clubs. Sulzberger's message differed radically: "I am against Ghetto living, or thinking, or acting merely because a portion of the community wishes to impose such a way of life upon those who happen to be Jews."³⁷

The outbreak of World War II exposed Sulzberger's conflicted feelings sharply. In October 1939, following FDR's referral to the "Jewish race" when speaking of the refugee problem, the publisher wrote to Secretary Morgenthau objecting that unless "people of good will" such as Roosevelt "exercise great care in choosing their words in defining this particular problem, they all too unwittingly help to play Hitler's game." The *New York Times* was not a sectarian organ, he informed Mordecai Kaplan, whose *Reconstructionist* magazine had labeled the newspaper's defense of the May 1939 White Paper "The 'Fifth Columnist' in Our Midst." Encouraged by Roosevelt's private disclosure of a White House project to study lands which could take millions of postwar refugees, Sulzberger had the *Times* devote numerous stories to a settlement in Santo Domingo, where only 159 Jews settled by the time immigration from Europe effectively ended in March 1941. Two months later, the *Times* enthusiastically published Magnes's bi-nationalist credo, and at year's end Sulzberger hosted a small meeting of anti-Zionists in his home to consider a statement favoring Palestine's economic and cultural development while rejecting Jewish sovereignty there. "Rather than attempt to avoid differences" between Jews, he wrote to Baltimore's Rabbi Morris Lazon, initiator of the gathering and whose lengthy pro-White Paper statement the *Times* had printed two years earlier, "people like you and me should seek to create them."³⁸

Feeling that "the best service I can render is to be as complete a maverick as my inclination suggests," Sulzberger pressed on. Soon after America entered the war, a *Times* editorial trumpeted British anxiety about a Jewish Army

and Arab antagonism to a Zionist state, and concluded that the full hopes of Jews could only be achieved by “the winning of a new world in which Jews along with other religions and national minorities may live peacefully and happily in every nation, enjoying the full rights of other citizens.” He helped Lazon draft a statement, which the *Times* printed in August 1942, of eighty-seven Reform rabbis criticizing “the political emphasis now paramount” in the Zionist program, “which tends to confuse our fellowmen about our place and function in society and also diverts our own attention from our historic role to live as a religious community.” Meeting with British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden, Sulzberger proposed that a post-war state be composed of Palestine, Transjordan, Syria and Iraq – the terms of the Atlantic Charter applying to all. Talking before Lazon’s temple brotherhood that November, an address that was featured in the *Times*, he posited that the continued demand by “Zionist extremists” for a Jewish fighting force would embarrass the Allies and could be distorted by the Axis in the Arab world; the sanctity of the Holy Land might be kept inviolate (exactly his earlier suggestion to Eden) through a large state formed from the surrounding countries and considerable Jewish immigration, but not sovereignty.³⁹

Sulzberger turned down Lazon’s subsequent idea to lead the assault on the Zionists, however, arguing that if he were to become too involved, “people would think the *Times* prejudiced in its reporting.” We have to speak individually about these matters, he added. To speak collectively against nationalist aspirations would “only make the same mistake” as the Zionists, who “band together” to speak for them. He did give Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles, with whom Lazon maintained close contact, a copy of Magnes’s views and his own November speech in Baltimore, while the anti-Zionist group agreed on December 7, 1942, to constitute themselves as the American Council for Judaism.⁴⁰

Concurrently, the *New York Times* downplayed reports of what would later be called the Holocaust. Two inches on page 5 were devoted to the news on June 27, 1942, that “Jews’ toll 700,000”; the story one week later that gas chambers were being used to kill 1,000 Jews a day appeared on page 6. A report at the end of November that 90 percent of Warsaw’s ghetto population had “disappeared” surfaced on page 10, while another on December 9 that two million Jews had been killed and five million more faced “extermination” appeared only on page 20. Two years later, the *Times* would give four column inches on page 12 to a report that 400,000 Hungarian Jews had been deported to their deaths so far, and that 350,000 more were likely to be killed in the next

weeks. Of only 24 front-page stories dealing with the Holocaust, all but six obscured the identity of the victims.⁴¹

The *Times* deliberately universalized the singular Jewish tragedy, and discounted the possibilities of rescue. On December 24, 1942, one week after an Allied declaration sharply condemned the Germans' "bestial policy of cold-blooded extermination" against Jews, Sulzberger warned Washington bureau chief Krock against a headline bearing the words "Jewish people" with regard to the mass murder. An exclusive story by his nephew, C.L. Sulzberger, in early February 1943 about Rumania proposing the release of 70,000 Jews emphasized official worry about enemy agents; the risk of stirring up the "latent discord" surrounding Jew and Arab in Palestine, with repercussions throughout the Moslem world; and the "numerous great difficulties" which existed regarding any mass shipment of refugees at this juncture in the war. An editorial on the Warsaw Ghetto uprising obliquely referred to "ghetto inhabitants" and "citizens of Poland"; even after the concurrent Bermuda Conference on Refugees, where the Anglo-American alliance despaired of helping Jews, the *Times* did no more than request the rescue of "innocent and persecuted people in Europe," those "suffering for freedom's sake." Following FDR's creation of the War Refugee Board in January 1944 to save Jews, an editorial preferred to speak of "persecuted minorities" and "Hitler's 160,000,000 homeless victims," adding that rescue was a "difficult task" because it had to be "consistent with fighting and winning the war."⁴²

Towards the end of World War II, Sulzberger explained his general approach to publicizing the Holocaust. Horace Kallen, dean of the graduate faculty of political and social science at the New School for Social Research, in joining others who criticized Sulzberger for a statement which omitted the Jewish heroes of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, added that to psychologists this signified "an identification feared and rejected, a flight in which the fleeing carries along with itself that which is fled." Wondering if a bill was to accompany his diagnosis, Sulzberger then replied at length in a private letter:

Naturally, I am not conscious of any effort to flee from the word Jew or Judaism itself. I have always associated myself with Jewish religious activities. I have, however a very firm conviction that Judaism should be restricted to the religious, ethical life, and that politics or racialism or nationalism should have no part in it. It has always seemed to me that whereas the Jewish community was correct, of course, in protesting the

fiendish acts directed against Jews by the Hitler regime, they missed their great opportunity of merging their cause with that of other assailed people when Hitler finally declared war. A minority, it seems to me, cannot save itself through its minority status but can only be successful if it can, with integrity, merge its cause with a larger movement. It seems to me that Judaism can, with entire propriety, link itself with the democratic faith, and that Judaism – as well as the other faiths of the world and other peoples of the world – can be saved through democracy. That was the reason I deliberately referred to these persons of Jewish faith who battled so gallantly in Warsaw as the unfortunate citizens of Poland.⁴³

This response equally explains Sulzberger's fixation for the remainder of the war against Jewish nationalism. He was glad to have "stirred a hornet's nest" with his speech at Baltimore, for "it unmasked the viciousness of Zionist propaganda" and "fortunately it has put me on my guard." Although resigning from the American Council for Judaism after it publicized a strong declaration at the same time that the American Jewish Conference convened to express U.S. Jewry's overwhelming pro-Zionist sentiment that August 1943, Sulzberger offered congratulations to Lazaron on "the excellent statement." Having helped formulate the Council's anti-Zionist manifesto, which the *Times* publicized extensively, he saw no choice but to resign from the UAHC's executive committee when that body remained in the Conference. When Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver attacked Sulzberger and the *Times* as "the only American newspaper that has set for its mission a fight on Zionism," the publisher retorted to Silver thus: entrusting statehood to a group that "willfully perverts and distorts facts" and "seeks to destroy the character of individuals who differ with it" would be "fundamentally bad judgment." Defiantly, he added: "I am opposed to Goebbels' tactics whether or not they are confined to Nazi Germany." In private, he grew bitter, telling his friend Billikopf that while he had pretty well disciplined himself to becoming indifferent to Zionist attacks, "that is unfortunate because some time they might be right and I may not be able to recognize it when that millennium arrives because the skin they are developing on me will be too thick."⁴⁴

Even the establishment by Great Britain of the Jewish Brigade in mid-September 1944 drew the *Times's* fire. Having obtained FDR's approval, Prime Minister Winston Churchill noted to the House of Commons that

while vast numbers of Jews were serving with the Anglo-American forces on all fronts, "it seems to me indeed appropriate that a special Jewish unit, a unit of that race which has suffered indescribable torments from the Nazis, should be represented as a distinct formation among the forces gathered for their overthrow." The very next day, a *Times* editorial warned that the new military force would "seriously misrepresent" most Jews. "It can plaster them with the label of separatism.... It will be a plea of guilty to the long-standing charge that the Jew is a foreign body in the national organism." "The hate-mongers who specialize in the international Jews," the newspaper concluded, "will have a fine new text." As if the Third Reich needed one at that stage.⁴⁵

The grim reality of Germany's "Final Solution of the Jewish Question" had no effect on *Times* coverage or on Sulzberger. A front-page story on May 1, 1945, about Dachau's capture by American troops did not include the word "Jew", while an article by C.L. Sulzberger about Russian estimates of the death toll at Auschwitz-Birkenau appeared on page 12 and made no mention of the fact that most of the more than one million victims there were Jews. Even while acknowledging the particular difficulty that Jews had in remaining in Europe, a *Times* editorial that July pleaded for a solution to "solve the problem of religious discrimination" on that continent. One month later, the publisher continued to maintain that he saw "no more reason to reconstitute the Jews as a nation than the Anglos, the Celts or the Saxons." While dropping his earlier wartime effort to find a large postwar haven in Australia for Jews, Sulzberger tried unsuccessfully to get like-minded friends to provide funding for Magnes's activities, and urged correspondents to cover the Hebrew University president's bi-nationalist views. He also took the unprecedented step in June 1946 of banning all advertisements from the American League for a Free Palestine, claiming that the League's implying the British were "not acting in good faith" in the Holy Land "overstepped certain bounds" and was "calculated to do harm in the world situation."⁴⁶

Notwithstanding a visit to Dachau and to the Nuremberg trials of Nazi leaders, Sulzberger went so far as to tell a Chattanooga audience in November 1946 that "by putting statehood first and refuge last" the Zionists had "jeopardized both." Echoing Magnes's viewpoint, he asserted that "countless Arabs" would admit that Palestine had room for 350,000 "displaced" Holocaust survivors but not for a Jewish state. Continuing to view Jews as a faith only, he admitted that he opposed political Zionists for their "coercive methods," for their "attempts at character assassination" (a hint about the attacks against him during the war), and for not using "their great moral strength to plead the cause

of all displaced persons.” While the American Council for Judaism printed extensive excerpts of his speech, the publisher soon went on to tell a meeting of the directors of the Associated Press that he believed “it is more important for the United States to get along with Great Britain than for Jews to have a Jewish homeland.” Asked at that conclave about Britain’s use of troops to suppress the Stern Group and other Jewish militant extremists in Palestine, he replied that, speaking as a Jew, he could well understand that “naturally the British do not like to have their servicemen taken away and shot.” He also requested the British ambassador in Washington, Lord Inverchapel, to have Magnes’s scheme placed on the agenda of the impending talks in London between the Jewish Agency and His Majesty’s Government.⁴⁷

By early 1947, however, the press of events swayed a reluctant Sulzberger to endorse partitioning Palestine into Jewish and Arab states. At a luncheon in the publisher’s office, the Jewish Agency’s representative in Washington, Eliyahu Epstein, was surprised to hear his host declare that if no way existed to solve the Jewish refugee problem in Europe, to stop terrorism in Palestine, and to satisfy the Jews there but through creating their own commonwealth, “let them have a ‘Mogen-Dovid’ if they want it on their flag, let them have their own Government, and let them be members of the UN if that is their desire. However, I will remain an American of Jewish faith, as I am.” An obviously displeased Anne O’Hare McCormick, a longtime advocate for Magnes’s views, made her argument clear: a “double-faced” Jewish Agency and other Jewish national institutions in Palestine had done nothing to aid the British in their struggle against terrorist “gangsters”; Arab and Muslim opposition against a Jewish state would “destroy the foundations of the new Pax Britannica” needed for world stability and peace; and the Jews, never to be satisfied with partition, would “sooner or later” try to “take revenge” by attacking the Arab countries. Sulzberger remained unmoved, and concluded that if partition were the only possible solution, all those involved ought to look for the best and most peaceful partition settlement as soon as possible. British soldiers, he added to Lazonby, should shoot Jews who crossed into the Arab section and vice versa. In a practical world” he saw “no other way out” but two states in Palestine.⁴⁸

Immediately after the majority recommendation of partition to the General Assembly by a UN Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP), a *Times* editorial on September 1, 1947, echoed Sulzberger’s conversion. Although “some of us have long had doubts as to the wisdom of creating a political state on a basis of religious faith,” it emphasized, the newspaper

stood ready to accept “any favorable” UN decision and “work and hope most earnestly for the success of the proposed new commonwealths,” believing that “the prestige of that great enterprise [the United Nations] to be of primary importance at this stage of the world’s history.” “A very well known man did not love Brutus less but loved Rome more,” the publisher explained to Magnes: “this poor old UN needs some support.” He bitterly resented the defections to Zionism of American Jewish Committee president Joseph Proskauer, writing close friend Edward S. Greenbaum that “apparently if you are a Jew you have to contribute Jewishly, eat Jewishly, think Jewishly, part your hair Jewishly – everything for the sake of efficiency. Gosh, I am sick!” Sulzberger resigned from the UAHC because of its “unwillingness to take a stand against *political* [his emphasis] Judaism.” He still believed that it was a mistake for Jews to become a nation, but as he told Iphigene, “we are now confronting a condition and not a theory.” He feared “there is a lot of trouble still in store,” now doubting that “countless Arabs” would say that Palestine had room for 350,000 Jewish refugees. Still, he refused Magnes’s request on November 27 to circulate to Assembly delegates a bi-nationalist compromise if a vote on the UNSCOP recommendations came to deadlock.⁴⁹

“History was written at Lake Success” began the *Times* editorial on November 30, 1947, one day after the General Assembly approved, without major change, the majority plan of its special committee on Palestine. While “many of us” had long entertained doubts concerning the wisdom of erecting a political state on the basis of religious faith, these doubts now had to yield to the fact of a decision arrived at by the necessary two-thirds majority after thorough investigation and “full and fair debate.” With the General Assembly the “most appropriate” forum to find a solution to the Palestine dilemma, the late editions read, its decision should command “the acquiescence, the respect and the loyal support of all nations and all peoples.” The General Assembly’s award did not go so far in territorial terms as most Zionists hoped; it would “grievously disappoint” the Arabs. But it was the best decision which “that great agency of world opinion” was able to discover. If the two peoples whose future it involves did not grant it willing compliance, the Security Council had to be “courageous enough and resolute enough” to supply the necessary means of enforcement. “Let us hope,” concluded the editors and their publisher, “that with this decision a solution has at last been found for the Holy Land’s tragic and heartbreaking problems.”⁵⁰

IV

Although Sulzberger insisted that the *Times's* editors had “no desire to add fuel to the fires now burning in the Holy Land,” the newspaper’s coverage of Palestine in the first months of 1948 took on a disparate quality. Editorials averred that defiance of the partition vote threatened the entire structure of the UN. A series by Herbert Matthews, however, unquestioningly reported British allegations that “illegal” Jewish immigrants coming from Eastern Europe to Palestine included many Soviet agents; Edwin James implied that the Jewish Agency’s Hagana defense force had abandoned its “conservative role” and gone over to terrorist tactics, and stated that the British were “limiting their efforts to trying to preserve order.” Unavailingly, Eliyahu Epstein provided evidence to Sulzberger of easy Arab armed infiltration across the country’s borders and of Jewish convoys being stripped by the British of their protective weapons, leaving them open to deadly Arab attack. Articles by Washington bureau chief James Reston, neglecting the discriminatory effect of the U.S. arms embargo upon the Hagana, released trial balloons from some of President Truman’s advisors about placing Palestine under a temporary trusteeship, and suggesting that termination of the British Mandate be postponed past midnight, May 14th.⁵¹

Julius Ochs Adler’s meeting with a Zionist delegation from Long Island in early February did not satisfy the latter. *Times* editorials, they noted, had failed to protest the invasion of military forces from Syria and Lebanon into the Holy Land, as well as Britain’s refusal to vacate a port to receive Jewish refugees (as stipulated in the partition plan) and to create a Jewish militia without delay, as unanimously recommended by the UN Partition Commission that had been set up after the General Assembly vote. In addition to Matthews’s series, Palestine correspondent Sam Pope Brewer accepted the official British positions, such as their stance regarding the Arab blockade in the Old City of Jerusalem. The delegation especially critiqued as false Reston’s report that Zionists sought to induce the Truman administration to send American troops to help implement the partition plan, and his echoing the “growing concern” of anti-partition State and Defense Department spokesmen about U.S. oil reserves in the Middle East without mention of previous facts reported in the *Times* which allayed such fears. A friendly Adler, who had been deeply moved by a visit to Dachau and Buchenwald as part of a press delegation assembled by General Dwight D. Eisenhower in the spring of 1945, defended the newspaper and only

promised to investigate their charges further.⁵²

Epstein's meeting with the editorial board in early March appeared more promising, beginning with Sulzberger's statement at the luncheon that after November 29, 1947, Palestine was no longer a Jewish-Arab controversy but the responsibility of the UN. Expressing satisfaction with this approach, the Jewish Agency representative announced that Palestinian Jewry would only accept partition. He then challenged Reston's defense of the State Department's legalistic view, stated by American representative Warren Austin at the UN on February 24, that the U.S. was not really bound by the General Assembly vote because the Security Council had no power under the UN Charter to implement political recommendations. Reston reluctantly revealed that State was considering a UN trusteeship and wished British troops to remain until a final and peaceful settlement were attained. Both Sulzberger and James decried this as unrealistic, and Sunday magazine editor Lester Markel came out strongly for partition as just and declared its implementation a test for the UN. Epstein's call for a Jewish militia and lifting the U.S. arms embargo would only bring further bloodshed, rejoined Reston, but Sulzberger disagreed. After lunch, the publisher privately complained to Epstein about the American Zionist leadership's having "persecuted" him for years for no reason whatsoever, his policy always having been one of "fairness and objectivity towards us," and suggested that his guest approach him freely and informally on any matter on which the Zionists might have grievances.⁵³

Two weeks later, Sulzberger insisted to Mordecai Kaplan and American Zionist representative Benjamin Akzin that the *Times* had not changed its position. Reading extensively from his 1937 memorandum, he maintained that the newspaper did not favor a Jewish State as "a solution for the so-called Jewish problem." He continued to disapprove of Zionism on principle, but was "basically friendly" to Zionism ever since "confronted with the factual situation." Following an amicable but animated discussion of columns by Reston, Matthews, and Brewer, Sulzberger agreed to Akzin's request that the newspaper investigate the story that the "oil argument is phoney," and that Standard Oil companies were artificially restricting oil output in America in favor of output in the Middle East because of the greater profits involved. Writing in his diary that evening, Kaplan thought the 1937 statement "as full of non-sequiturs as an adolescent's face is of pimples," and he concluded: "I cannot conceive of a more accurate reflection of the pathetically confused state of mind of a well-meaning rich American Jew of the third generation than that document."⁵⁴

Sulzberger viewed their exchange in a very different light. Writing to Reston about the interview, he added that the present crisis in Palestine reminded him of a man who met a friend wearing a cast on his arm. The friend explained that it started five years ago, when he was at the luxurious Hotel Crillon in Paris. Just as he was going to bed, a maid came in with some fresh towels. Then she turned to him and asked, "Is there anything more I can do for you, Monsieur?" When he replied "No," the beautiful girl looked at him appealingly, and asked the question again. He replied, "No, thanks." "Well," the friend went on, "last night I was hanging a picture on a wall of my home when I suddenly realized what that girl had on her mind. Then I fell off a tall ladder and broke my arm!" Concluded Sulzberger: "That seems to me what the situation in Palestine is. They have been building it up for 50 years and the arm has broken only now." If we are to be blamed, Reston replied a week later, we should be blamed for not reporting more of "Zionist tactics" in Washington than we did, and for not taking a firmer line against the "partition-without implementation-policy" which the government followed last fall. These very tactics of political pressure and "intemperate propaganda," he ended, were what likely prodded Secretary of State George Marshall to press Truman successfully on March 19 for retreating from partition in favor of a UN trusteeship.⁵⁵

While Zionists and their allies heatedly denounced the U.S. reversal, the *New York Times* minced no words in its own response. "Weak, uncertain and confused, the prestige of American policy has suffered a severe blow in the handling of this issue," it wrote, adding, "We have played a shabby trick on the Jewish community of Palestine, which put its faith in our promises." "Three things need to be said, and said at once, concerning the present shift of American policy on Palestine," the editors continued. "It comes as the climax of a series of moves which has seldom been matched for ineptitude in the handling of an international issue by an American Administration. It is a plain and unmistakable surrender to the threat of force. It holds little promise of being able to avoid the very hazards which it is intended to circumvent." Epstein rushed to cable congratulations to Sulzberger for the "admirable" editorial, which the Jewish Agency official deemed a "highly constructive approach most valuable at critical time," and he signed off "Sincerely and affectionately."⁵⁶

Convinced that Washington's shift greatly damaged the standing of the U.S. and the still fragile UN, but still worried about Zionist pressure, Sulzberger maintained his individual course. The *Times* continued to give equal voice to anti-Zionist letters to the editor, and the publisher contacted the

Federal Council of Churches in America in response to a plea from Magnes for protecting Jerusalem as a Holy City. Yet he found “disturbing” an effort by “so-called prominent Jews,” particularly close friends, to subscribe to a policy for admitting Jewish refugees to the U.S. as part of Magnes’s efforts. When Truman, during a meeting with Sulzberger on May 8, criticized the pressure of “New York Jews” regarding Palestine, his visitor queried: “Wouldn’t you make that New York Zionists, Mr. President, because I am bitter about them, too.” Truman quickly assented, and added his deep concern about the rise of antisemitism in the country as a result of Zionist activities. “Of course,” noted the publisher after his appointment, “the President doesn’t do very much to effect it when he quite naturally confuses Jews with Zionists and Zionists with Jews.” Since neither Truman nor Under Secretary of State Robert Lovett seemed to think that Washington’s conduct had been as vacillating as it appeared and that any difficulties were due to outside sources, particularly London, Sulzberger suggested that the U.S. prepare a white paper on Palestine and release it as quickly as possible.⁵⁷

His practical suggestion went abegging. Unbeknownst to Sulzberger, Truman had privately pledged to Zionist avatar Chaim Weizmann in April that if the UN did not reverse partition and a Jewish State arose after the termination of the Mandate, he would recognize it. Six minutes after the State of Israel came into being on Friday, May 14, 1948, the president announced recognition *de facto* of the new commonwealth. The *New York Times* accepted the act as a *fait accompli* rather than endorse Israel’s declaration of independence. “My attitude toward Israel is the same as my attitude toward Indonesia,” Sulzberger told the Newark *Jewish News*. “I wish it well, but am completely without nationalistic fervor toward it.” And to an anti-Zionist friend, he added the next month: “I feel a sharp sense of tragedy for the suffering of refugees. But when a national state is the issue, I feel no closer to the State of Israel than I do to Britain or China.”⁵⁸

With his battle to maintain Judaism strictly as a religion lost, Sulzberger gradually withdrew from any contact with Jewish organizational life. He quit She’arith Israel Synagogue (so his children were informed) because congregants sang the Zionist anthem “HaTikva” immediately after the Star Spangled Banner, and ended his service as a Temple Emanu-El trustee. “I am no more interested” in Palestine, he had written Jewish Theological Seminary president Louis Finkelstein two months before the State of Israel’s establishment, “than I am in the Valley of the Tigris and Euphrates. After all, if you are trying to get a homeland that is where they tell me I came from –

so did you and the rest of us.” With the Seminary graduating “a far higher percentage of politically minded” Jews (read Zionists) than was the Reform movement’s Hebrew Union College, he resigned from the Seminary’s board of trustees. While considering himself a Jew who, like any Unitarian, did not insist on rituals, he disagreed with a North Carolina resident’s assertion that Unitarians were less assertive than Jews: “You are talking about Jews who have been persecuted or who have suffered in some manner as a minority. That is what develops the assertiveness or cowardice, and I prefer the former.” A year later, he complained to his like-minded friend Greenbaum that the Jewish Telegraphic Agency and at least a part of the American Jewish Committee were now associated with the pro-Zionist United Jewish Appeal: “The only thing I miss is the Jewish Chiropractors’ Society. In other words, J E W is to be the common denominator for everything we do. God help us!”⁵⁹

He kept the newly created State of Israel at arm’s length. Sulzberger continued cordial relations with Epstein (called Elath after the state’s creation), heartily congratulating “Eliyahu” upon the State’s admission to the UN in 1949 and his becoming ambassador to the U.S., and adding the hope that Elath’s future journey “will be full of sunshine.” Yet he refused to identify publicly with an Israeli industrial institute, insisting that he and others who held themselves to be Jews by faith only should not “whittle down their position by apparently throwing the nationalist anchor too windward.” Although “sympathetic” to the ideas of the American Council for Judaism, Sulzberger correctly sensed that the creation of Israel “spells the beginning of the end” for that anti-Zionist splinter group. He agreed with a Council executive at the end of 1959 that there was value in “constantly demonstrating that Judaism and politics are separate and distinct,” but did not think that the Council could have “much success in that effort.” The most the publisher could do was to insure that no Jewish reporter was ever assigned to the *Times*’ bureau in Jerusalem, and the editorial page under his stewardship never referred to Israel as “the Jewish State.” Nor did he ever visit Israel, canceling a projected trip in 1961 in protest against a speech by Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion at the World Zionist Conference.⁶⁰

The Sulzberger family’s sensitivity that the *Times* might be thought of as a Jewish newspaper persisted. Bronx-bred Abraham (“Abe”) M. Rosenthal, assigned the byline of A.M. Rosenthal by a “bullpen” of supervising editors who tended to be mostly Roman Catholic, was initially denied a correspondent’s post that became vacant in the Paris office. Bureau chief C.L. Sulzberger, judging Rosenthal’s behavior gauche, had cabled back that

Paris already had one Jew. (He meant Henry Giniger, the number two man there; Sulzberger's nephew did not even count himself a member of the tribe.) In 1952, managing editor Turner Catledge refused Daniel Schorr a job in Europe because he feared that with so many Jewish reporters, the *Times* would be criticized if it had to mobilize for coverage of renewed war in the Middle East; Sulzberger concurred. Similarly, Sulzberger decided the next year to remove the energetic Irving ("Pat") Spiegel from covering Jewish affairs, explaining to Spiegel's brother that the change was "due entirely to my reaction that Jews are not a specialty, and millions of Jews should not be treated as such but as general news." When the legendary Yiddish-speaking reporter, who would devote thirty years to covering Jewish organizations and events for the newspaper, received a temporary assignment in Jerusalem, Sulzberger objected to his son-in-law and successor as publisher, Orvil Dryfoos. While having no complaint at all about Spiegel, he hated to see a "Jewish expert" and now "a specialist in Jewish politics" associated with the *Times* in the public mind.⁶¹

In fact, the newspaper's attitude towards the State of Israel took on a generally friendly tone. The *Times* appeared to rate "very well" with the Israeli government, wired C.L. Sulzberger on the heels of an early interview with Ben-Gurion and Gene Currivan's positive stories. An editorial welcoming the exchange of ambassadors rhapsodized that "after all the doubt and turmoil, the relationship between our vast republic and the vigorous little new state on the shores of the Mediterranean should proceed under happy auspices"; Israel's bid soon thereafter for admission to the UN obtained a strong endorsement. Receiving Ben-Gurion's praise in 1951 that the paper "reflects the finest and most exalted principles of honest and unbiased reporting," Sulzberger wrote to associates that "when you think of our history, this is particularly gratifying." Additional editorials applauded a Tripartite Middle East arms agreement that gave Israel equality in acquiring weaponry as strengthening the "free nations against onslaught of the totalitarian world"; found Israel's proposals for Jerusalem "practical and sensible"; seconded Israel's moral claim on Holocaust reparations from Western Germany; and detailed the new nation's advances in industry and agriculture. Struck by the "more positive and constructive line" on Israel expressed by Sulzberger and colleagues at a private lunch in 1956, Elath wrote to Frankfurter: "I could not help wondering what the shade of old Ochs – had he been present – would have thought; he would hardly have recognized the Board of his paper!"⁶²

At one point, worried State Department officials even cautioned Israeli

counterparts that the *Times* was losing its influence in Middle Eastern affairs because, although critical at times, it was “too closely identified” with Israel. Reston did highlight Washington’s protest of Israeli attacks along the Egyptian border and especially a reprisal raid in 1953 against Jordanian civilians. The paper continued to carry datelines reading “Jerusalem, Israeli sector”; accepted Jordanian accusations that mosques were destroyed in Jaffa and Haifa – its own correspondent’s information to the contrary notwithstanding; and gave favorable press to Egypt’s new President Nasser. Yet an editorial also insisted that UN forces occupy the Sinai Desert and the Straits of Tiran after Israel’s victory against Egyptian attack in 1956, following C. L. Sulzberger’s much earlier observation that “most Arab countries still have no more intention of accepting Israel’s existence than their forebears had of accepting the Crusaders’ kingdom in Jerusalem.” Without “precise guarantees”, the celebrated “Foreign Affairs” columnist had asked, could Israel be asked to evacuate Gaza – where German engineers built concrete forts for Egypt – and the entrance to Aqaba – where Nasser had mounted British coast-artillery rifles? Nothing would be “lastingly achieved,” read another editorial at the end of 1959, until the Arab states agreed to work with Israel, and until Israel and her Arab neighbors cooperated in compensating “those who are really refugees” on both sides of the warring divide.⁶³

The *Times*’s position on Israel in this decade did not mirror a tempering of Sulzberger’s own views. Turning down a request to write an article about “Jewish contribution to journalism,” he opined that those on his newspaper who happened to be of the Jewish faith “make their contributions as Americans, just as do those of other faiths. I hope that their Judaism strengthens their moral fiber, just as Protestantism or Catholicism should strengthen persons of those faiths.” He once complained to Catledge about “too much” coverage of Israel, and suspected on another occasion that praise and wide distribution by the American Jewish Congress of a *Times* editorial proved that “I must be wrong!” Hearing in 1957 that a niece was going to Israel for six months because of her interest in Judaism as a religion, he told Jeanne Sulzberger that if it were religion only, she could get it at one of the Jewish seminaries in the United States “Rather,” he opined to Elath, “it’s a part of the nationalistic urge, which you understand and I don’t. Happy Chanuka – with a little Merry Christmas on the side!” The publisher cancelled his subscription to the pro-Reform *Menorah Journal*, stating that “frankly, I’ve become less and less interested in formalized faiths of any kind and find an inclination to support those things that unite rather than those that separate.” Why does the *New*

York Times continue to be “as friendly” to the State of Israel as it does?” he wrote in a letter not sent. “My only answer is that at the moment I haven’t the courage to criticize any group which has suffered as severely as have many of the Israelis. But please understand that does not mean that I approve of their actions.”⁶⁴

On Thanksgiving Eve 1959, seated in lovely Hillandale and surrounded by his two babies and two papillon dogs, a “damn tired” Sulzberger put his inner thoughts to paper. Admitting that he had challenged Judaism just as any other faith that called on formal ritual, he had not said a prayer to a god in years, “and I sincerely hope that I never will.” Not to believe in God was “just as stupid as to believe in one.” He thought the universe beyond human comprehension. Reform Judaism did not “demand much,” but little contact with it had drawn him away from it. While his “nice niece” had been “overwhelmed” by Zionism, thinking she had become religious, he thought religion was not learning to be “a child of God but rather learning how to live with man, and I think I do that of and for myself.” Of late questioning his views of life after death, he continued to subscribe to Matthew Arnold’s faith in “the not ourselves which makes for righteousness,” but “beyond that, no.” The long disquisition concluded:

My prayers are to me. I challenge myself to be good to those I love, to treat with decency those with whom I come into contact. If I deserve punishment, it will be meted out by my fellow men or by my own conscience. That is ever present, and one cannot fool or mislead it. Polonius said it: “This above all, to thine own self be true; And it must follow, as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man.”⁶⁵

Not having a personal god, Sulzberger would go on to define himself as “a conscious Jew, just as I suppose any member of a minority is aware whenever he rubs shoulders with any aspect of the issue.” Three drafts reiterated the conviction that he considered himself “a religious man,” trying “to live in an upright manner and to treat my fellows with thought and understanding.” While getting “a bit worried” that he was growing “too conservative” in his political views, he acknowledged that his “fortunate” life made him unable to tell if antisemitic prejudice was “as acute now as it used to be.” He felt “no affinity” for the State of Israel, but only “sympathy with those who, being homeless, made it their refuge.” With many grandchildren of many faiths, Sulzberger called himself a

Jew “because they have been picked on and I want to help. Besides, the faith is less demanding than the others that I know.” His “greatly simplified” faith came down to this: “My obligation is to my fellow man, and my prayer is that I may be worthy, not of him but among him.” And to his son, who had recently taken over the mantle of publisher, he offered two pieces of advice in a draft of September 1963: never trust the Soviet Union and “watch the Germans! As a people they are war-like sheep and can again be directed along dictatorial, martial paths if another leader comes to point the way for them.”⁶⁶

The anxieties which Sulzberger had long suffered about Jewish issues rarely troubled his son Arthur Ochs Sulzberger. Raised in a home devoid of a Jewish consciousness and coming to maturity in a world of increased tolerance after World War II, “Punch” would recall that “religion had gone down the ladder of importance as far as the issues I was concerned with” during the thirty-year tenure to follow. Orvil Dryfoos had already broken precedent by choosing a Jew, John Oakes (son of Adolph Ochs’s brother George, who had altered his name during World War I), to head the editorial page. The *Times*’s support for Israel reached its apogee during the Six-Day War of 1967, with editorials reminding Washington of its commitment to defend Israel’s sovereignty and even advocating U.S. military intervention if required. Reston himself hailed Israel’s having “won the war we opposed,” while C.L. Sulzberger concluded: “Despite ourselves, American prestige has risen.” Arthur and Iphigene had supported a Reform rabbi, boasting family roots going back to the American Revolution, to serve as “Jewish advisor” at Columbia University in 1933 only because he understood “the problem of the Jewish youths who come from Orthodox and foreign homes, and who need to be taught the principles of this country and made to abandon their ghetto thinking”; “Punch” strongly backed the appointment of the university’s first Orthodox Jewish chaplain after the 1968 student unrest on campus. The following year, he would name the Yiddish-speaking, tempestuous Rosenthal Managing Editor and, eight years later, Executive Editor.⁶⁷

Sulzberger senior, confined to a wheelchair since 1963, kept up for a few years with business transactions and gave his son helpful advice. On the lookout against “unnecessary references” in the *Times* to race and religion, such as had slipped through to his consternation when bulletins about Israel’s trial of Adolf Eichmann referred to the “Jewish race,” he assured one worried Jewish reader in 1967 that “kosher” was acceptable as simply “a descriptive term” about a particular industry. By then, with vision impaired and memory beginning to fail, he became, in Iphigene’s recollection, “just too tired to cope.” He stopped

going to the office, making a last visit on August 6, 1968. The 30-Year Club, comprising 800 members who had worked at least thirty years for the *Times*, planned to present a gold watch to him four months later. That was the week he died.⁶⁸

Thus did a conflicted life draw to its end. A man of quick wit and instinctive honesty, this liberal-minded American inspired the theme for Columbia's bicentennial that also mirrored his own faith and the *raison d'être* of his stewardship of the world's most influential newspaper: "Man's right to knowledge and the free use thereof." At the same time, not content with the turn to tradition of activist Cyrus L. Sulzberger or the assimilationism of publisher Adolph S. Ochs, he ultimately divorced himself from the Jewish people. As Horace Kallen had charged in 1944, Sulzberger's anxieties regarding his own Jewish identity led to rejection: of Jewish fraternities, a "Jewish" Supreme Court seat, a Jewish Brigade, Jewish philanthropy, Jewish social clubs. His "greatly simplified" faith became as bland as the initials assigned by the *Times* to bylines of Jewish writers and as vacuous as the obituaries accorded him by Jewish organizations. Refusing to join his brother David as an official of the American Jewish Committee, he admitted early on that "I do not feel the ties which cause the group of high-minded men who compose its executive committee to watch the interests of the Jew as they do." "Deep down," in his daughter Judy's opinion, he "probably would just as soon not have been Jewish." On matters relating to Jews, read a last confessional to his four children, "I was always on the fringe – more so now than ever."⁶⁹

Insecurity colored Sulzberger's perspective on the Holocaust. His refusal to accept the concept of a "Jewish race" (unlike FDR and Churchill), preferring the ideal of universal brotherhood, appeared naïve in the face of Hitler's systematic slaughter of one people. Millions of Jews under the swastika were not, *Times* editorials notwithstanding, "suffering for freedom's sake." Obscuring within the pages of the *Times* both their fate and their unique need for rescue reflected, in one scholar's apt judgment, "either a profound miscalculation or colossal miscomprehension." It also represented a dark failure of journalism: the widely-acknowledged newspaper of record influenced others to submerge the greatest crime in mankind's recorded annals and, as a consequence, decisively militated against arousing public opinion. Hitler's prime enemy did not merit focus during World War II in "all the news that's fit to print." A centennial celebration of the Ochs-Sulzberger ownership of the paper would somberly admit the validity of criticism that it had "grossly" underplayed coverage of the Holocaust; Sulzberger himself never did.⁷⁰

Thus, too, his stance vis-à-vis the second major phenomenon of modern Jewish history – Jewish statehood. Ever since the 1937 trip to Palestine left him feeling “a foreigner” among the Jewish nationalists living there, Sulzberger consistently shied away from Zionism. In 1939 he even gave a donation for refugee work to the National Missions of the Presbyterian Church, rather than the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, because the nation’s leading Jewish relief organization was now associated with the Zionist cause. Magnes’s binationalist dream and a (futile) search for large-scale havens became his mantra. The editor of the liberal *Cleveland Plain Dealer* told Sulzberger that he was “entirely too timid and too afraid when it comes to the Jewish question,” and that “Gentiles would respect him and the *Times* more if he did not cramp his editorial writers, who would be inclined to be outspoken” – to no avail. His obdurate refusal to alter course after V-E Day, bringing the usually temperate Rabbi Milton Steinberg of New York’s Park East Synagogue to conclude “God protect us from that kind of Jew who publishes *The Times*,” only relaxed with the UNSCOP majority report for partition. “I accepted the inevitable,” Sulzberger wrote to Elath years later, but his shift aimed to bolster the fragile United Nations in the emerging Cold War. He felt no affinity for the State of Israel, only sympathy for the “homeless” who made it their haven.⁷¹

Accordingly, although Sulzberger called himself in 1959 “a conscious Jew,” no vestige of Jewish identity surfaced when Temple Israel Cemetery received his body for internment. No family members were present, and the burial of his cremains was swift, as the publisher had ordered. Over the plot, on the stone bench that shaded the spot in front of the Ochs mausoleum, the name SULZBERGER was inscribed. “My father had said he had lived all his life under the name of Ochs, and he was damned if he was going to be buried under it,” recalled Ruth. The marker above his grave, following Sulzberger’s order, consisted of a singular epitaph. Its nine words were taken from the inscription on a silver martini shaker given to him from friends and family twenty years earlier, on the occasion of his thirtieth anniversary at the *New York Times*. It was a recipe for an “A.H.S. cocktail; in the fashion of A.H.S., mix well and serve lavishly”: “One part wisdom, one part wit, one part humanity.”⁷²

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Notes

- 1 *New York Times*, Dec. 16, 1968; "Arthur Hays Sulzberger: A Biography," *New York Times Company* (New York, 1969).
- 2 *New York Times*, Dec. 12, 1968; *Facts About the New York Times* (New York, 2000), pp. 10-11.
- 3 *New York Times*, Dec. 12 and 13, 1968.
- 4 *New York Times*, Dec. 16, 1968; James Reston, "A Tribute," *New York Times Company* (New York, 1969).
- 5 *New York Times*, Dec. 16, 1968. Susan E. Tifft and Alex S. Jones, *The Trust: The Private and Powerful Family Behind The New York Times* (Boston, 1999), p. 447. Dryfoos's father, the much admired Orvil, had succeeded Sulzberger as publisher in 1961, but died prematurely two years later from a heart attack that was most likely caused by the enormous strain of confronting the city's worst newspaper strike.
- 6 *New York Times*, Dec. 16, 1968; Tiff and Jones, *The Trust*, p. 447.
- 7 *From Iphigene, The Memoirs of Iphigene Ochs Sulzberger, As Told to Susan W. Dryfoos* (New York, 1979), p. 107; Susan E. Tifft and Alex S. Jones, "The Family: How being Jewish Shaped the Dynasty that Runs the Times," *New Yorker*, Apr. 19, 1999, p. 48.
- 8 *From Iphigene*, p. 108; Jonathan D. Sarna, *JPS: The Americanization of Jewish Culture, 1888-1988* (Philadelphia, 1989), pp. 15-16; Naomi W. Cohen, *Encounter With Emancipation: The German Jews in the United States, 1830-1914* (Philadelphia, 1984), pp. 272-273; Philip Cowan, *Memoirs of an American Jew* (New York 1932), pp. 127-129.
- 9 Cohen, *Encounter With Emancipation*, pp. 320-329; Cyrus L. Sulzberger, *Is Immigration a Menace?* (New York, 1912); Beatrice Magnes interview, Mar. 12, 1964, American Jewish Committee oral history collection (hereafter AJCOH), Jewish Division, New York Public Library, New York.
- 10 Chap. 1.
- 11 Chap. 1; Marnin Feinstein, *American Zionism, 1884-1904* (New York, 1965), pp. 98, 250-252; Charles Wyszowski, *A Community in Conflict: American Jewry during the Great European Immigration* (Lanham, 1991), p. 176. For the Sixth Zionist Congress, see David Vital, *Zionism, The Formative Years* (Oxford, 1982), pp. 277-309.
- 12 Cyrus S. Sulzberger, "Patriotism and Zionism," *The Maccabean*, 6 (Feb. 1904), 83-84; A. Sulzberger to Independent Jewish News Service, Feb. 31, 1943, Palestine and Zionism files, Arthur Hays Sulzberger MSS., New York Times Archives (hereafter SA), New York; Cyrus L. Sulzberger, "Personal Recollections of Herzl," *The Maccabean*, 7 (Aug. 1904), 94-95.
- 13 Chap. 1; Naomi W. Cohen, *Not Free to Desist: The American Jewish Committee, 1906-1966* (Philadelphia, 1972), pp. 105-106. Cyrus Sulzberger also became a stalwart of the *Kehillah* communal body, bringing the city's Jewish groups to collaborate for regarding service bureaus and other projects. Arthur A. Goren, *New York Jews and the Quest for Community: The Kehillah Experiment, 1908-1922* (New York, 1970).
- 14 Cohen, *Not Free to Desist*, pp. 92, 109-110; *From Iphigene*, p. 111. The British declaration,

- issued by Lord Balfour on behalf of the war cabinet to Lord Rothschild on November 2, 1917, pledged His Majesty's Government to "facilitate the achievement" of a Jewish "national home" in Palestine. For American Jewish Committee president's Louis Marshall's defense to Ochs of his organization's stance, as well as his opposition to an anti-Zionist memorial (which the *Times* printed) that was presented to President Woodrow Wilson before the Versailles Peace Conference, see *Louis Marshall: Champion of Liberty*, 2, C. Reznikoff, ed. (Philadelphia, 1957), pp. 724-725.
- 15 Sulzberger draft statement, Dec. 15, 1959, Jews and Judaism files, SA.
 - 16 Sulzberger to C. Sulzberger, n.d., Jews and Judaism files, SA. A *Times* reporter, quoting a part of this letter, erred in giving Ochs as the recipient. Richard F. Shepard, *The Paper's Papers: A Reporter's Journey Through the Archives of the New York Times* (New York, 1996), p. 301.
 - 17 Sulzberger to Riegelman, Feb. 19, 1954, Jews and Judaism files, SA; Emanuel Neumann, *In The Arena: An Autobiographical Memoir* (New York, 1976), p. 30; *From Iphigene*, pp. 78-82.
 - 18 Harrison E. Salisbury, *Without Fear Or Favor: The New York Times and its Times* (New York, 1980), p. 30; Tift and Jones, "The Family," pp. 45, 48.
 - 19 Shepard, *The Paper's Papers*, p. 302; Tift and Jones, "The Family," pp. 46-47; Silas Bent, "Mr. Ochs's 'Times'," *Menorah Journal*, May 1928, 440-441. A *Times* editorial also defended Temple Emanu-El's decision not to offer the pulpit to Stephen Wise, as the liberal rabbi refused to have his speech always be subject and under control of the board of trustees. *New York Times*, Jan. 11, 1906.
 - 20 James G. Heller, *Isaac M. Wise: His Life, Work and Thought* (New York, 1965), pp. 605-606, 463-464; *New York Times*, Nov. 24, 1917; May 7, 1922. Wise and the Reform organizations which he had created, the Central Conference of American Rabbis and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, consistently opposed Zionism at this time. See Heller, *Isaac M. Wise*, part 3, chapters 8-9; David Polish, *Renew Our Days: The Zionist issue in Reform Zionism* (Jerusalem, 1976), pp. 50-57.
 - 21 Salisbury, *Without Fear or Favor*, p. 29; Bent, "Mr. Ochs's Times," 439; Gerald W. Johnson, *An Honorable Titan: A Biographical Study of Adolph S. Ochs* (New York, 1946), pp. 260-261; A.H. Sulzberger address, Oct. 26, 1946, Jews and Judaism files, SA.
 - 22 Sulzberger address, Oct. 26, 1946, Jews and Judaism files, SA; Marian Sulzberger Heiskell interview, Nov. 7, 1983, AJCOH; Susan W. Dryfoos interview, May 23, 1984, AJCOH; Arthur Ochs Sulzberger interview, Nov. 10, 1983, AJCOH; Sulzberger to Strunsky, Apr. 30, 1937, Jews and Judaism files, SA.
 - 23 Tift and Jones, *The Trust*, p. 236; Sulzberger draft statement, Nov. 1930 (revised 1934), Palestine and Zionism files, SA. To the pro-Zionist James McDonald, he confessed in 1929 that "were I to visit Poland, Rumania, Hungary and Bulgaria, I can conceive of my casting all theory to the winds, and thanking God that even a comparative handful of Jews could escape their butchers, and by reason of the Balfour Declaration find in Palestine the security to which all human beings are entitled." Sulzberger to McDonald, July 8, 1929, Palestine and Zionism files, SA.
 - 24 Johnson, *An Honorable Titan*, pp. 300-302; Shepard, *The Paper's Papers*, p. 303; Ochs to Vogelstein, July 22, 1933, Adolph Ochs files, SA; *Advocate for the Damned: The*

- Diaries and Papers of James G. McDonald, 1932-1935*, R. Breitman, B. McDonald, and S. Hochberg eds. (Bloomington, 2007), pp. 402, 626.
- 25 Ronald Brownstein, "The New York Times on Nazism (1933-39)," *Midstream*, 26 (Apr. 1980), 14-16; Sulzberger to Deutsch, Jan. 1, 1934, and Feb. 13, 1934, American Jewish Congress files, SA; Railey to Sulzberger, Mar. 1, 1934; Sulzberger to Railey, Apr. 2 and 25, 1934; all in Germany files, SA; Sulzberger to Morgenthau, Apr. 27, 1934, Henry Morgenthau, Jr. files, SA. He also kept himself disassociated from active participation in any movement which sprang from the oppression of Jews in Germany, explaining privately that "only in this way can the unprejudiced and unbiased position of the *Times* be understood." Sulzberger to Kotschnig, Nov. 22, 1935, Refugees files, SA.
 - 26 Sulzberger to Strauss, Apr. 15, 1933, Palestine and Zionism files, SA; Sulzberger to Strauss, Dec. 23, 1933; Simons to Strauss, Feb. 20, 1934; both in Box 41, Lewis Strauss MSS., American Jewish Historical Society (formerly in Waltham, Mass., now in the Center for Jewish History, New York City—hereafter AJHS); Monty Noam Penkower, *Decision on Palestine Deferred: America, Britain and Wartime Diplomacy, 1939-1945* (London, 2002), pp. 14-15. Strauss, like Sulzberger, was sensitive to the amount of "Jewish news" in the press, and did not want to "be a party to adding to it." Strauss to Sulzberger, Oct. 14, 1936, Lewis Strauss file, SA.
 - 27 Ochs to Vogelstein, July 22, 1933, Adolph Ochs files, SA; *From Iphigene*, pp. 192, 170-171. Some of Ochs's generation and background also sensed early on the dangers implicit in the Hitler regime. Cyrus Sulzberger was deeply troubled by Julius Streicher's Nuremberg weekly *Der Stuermer*, while Henry Morgenthau, Sr. presciently told John D. Rockefeller, Jr. on Labor Day 1933 that not only was war inevitable, but that "Germany would be dismembered," and "what would be left would not...be a world power for many years to come." *From Iphigene*, p. 191; Daniel Okrent, *Great Fortune, The Epic of Rockefeller Center* (New York, 2004 ed.), p. 284.
 - 28 *From Iphigene*, pp. 175-177; "Arthur Hays Sulzberger: A Biography," pp. 9-11.
 - 29 David Halberstam, *The Powers That Be* (New York, 1979), pp. 216-217. Sulzberger's private admission in April 1933, as recorded in James McDonald's diary, is revealing in this regard: "He said that one of the worst things from his point of view was that Hitler's attacks had made him for the first time race conscious." *Advocate for the Doomed*, p. 58.
 - 30 Sulzberger to Goldman, June 15, 1936; Sulzberger to Goldman, June 21, 1937; both in file 6/15, Robert Goldman MSS., American Jewish Archives (hereafter AJA), Cincinnati, Ohio; Sulzberger to Goldman, Oct. 25, 1938, UAHC files, SA. From the same perspective, Sulzberger had the *Times* report the creation of the World Jewish Congress in 1936, but cautioned an editor not to devote much space to the subject, to which "there has been grave opposition to this on the part of Jews throughout the world." Sulzberger to James, June 1, 1936, James Rosenberg files, SA.
 - 31 Sulzberger draft to Frankfurter (not sent), Aug. 30, 1962, Frankfurter file, SA; Billikopf to Frankfurter, Nov. 2, 1938; Frankfurter to Billikopf, Nov. 15, 1938; both in file 8/2, Jacob Billikopf MSS., AJA.
 - 32 Sulzberger to Billikopf, Jan. 5, 1939, file 29/2, Billikopf MSS., AJA; newspaper

- clippings, July 22, 1938, Palestine files, SA; "Divide and Conquer," Editorial, *New York Times*, July 31, 1938.
- 33 *New York Times*, Nov. 16, 1938; Sulzberger to Buell, Aug. 6, 1938, Anti-Semitism files, SA. On the evening of November 9-10, 1938, a savage pogrom, since known as *Kristallnacht*, destroyed synagogues and shops, murdered almost 100 Jews, and sent 30,000 Jews to concentration camps.
 - 34 Sulzberger draft, Feb. 1937, L35/129, Central Zionist Archives (hereafter CZA), Jerusalem.
 - 35 Magnes to Sulzberger, Mar. 22, 1937; Sulzberger to Magnes, July 8, 1937; both in Palestine and Zionism files, SA; *New York Times*, July 8, 1937; Sulzberger to Magnes, Aug. 2, 1937, Palestine and Zionism files, SA. In November 1929, following savage Arab attacks on the Jewish community, the *Times* had highlighted an article by its Palestine correspondent, Joseph Levy, which endorsed bi-nationalism. The plan, originating with the highly suspect H. St. John Philby and meeting with Magnes's approval, came to naught once the Jewish Agency, including major European non-Zionists, sharply opposed Magnes's negotiation as unauthorized and naïve. *The Magnes-Philby Negotiations, 1929: The Historical Record*, M. Kaufman ed. (Jerusalem, 1998).
 - 36 Sulzberger to Hirschmann, Oct. 21, 1937, Palestine and Zionism files, SA; Jan. 1937 Palestine resolution, UAHC files, SA; UAHC Executive meeting, June 19, 1938, Union of American Hebrew Congregations' Archives, New York City; *New York Times*, May 18, 1939.
 - 37 Rothschild to Sulzberger, Mar. 7, 1939; Sulzberger to Rothschild, Mar. 10, 1939; both in Jews and Judaism files, SA.
 - 38 Sulzberger to Morgenthau, Oct. 10, 1939; Sulzberger to Kaplan, Nov. 28, 1939; both in Jews and Judaism file, SA; *Reconstructionist*, June 16, 1939; Sulzberger memorandum, Dec. 28, 1939, F.D. Roosevelt files, SA; Yehuda Bauer, *American Jewry and the Holocaust: The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 1939-1945* (Detroit, 1981), p. 201; *New York Times*, July 20, 1941; *New York Times*, May 28, 1939; Sulzberger to Lazon, Dec. 26, 1941, Lazon file, SA.
 - 39 Sulzberger to Lazon, Dec. 26, 1941; Sulzberger to Lazon, June 29, 1942; both in Lazon file, SA; *New York Times*, Jan. 22, 1942; *New York Times*, Aug. 30, 1942; Sulzberger to Lazon, Sept. 17, 1942, Box 3046, Morris Lazon MSS., AJA; *New York Times*, Nov. 6, 1942. The Atlantic Charter, signed by Churchill and Roosevelt in August 1941, pledged the two powers to a world of self-government for all peoples, free trade policies in general, and a permanent system of world security following some transition period after the war.
 - 40 Sulzberger to Lazon, Nov. 12, 1942, Box 3045, Lazon MSS., AJA; Sulzberger to Welles, Nov. 11, 1942, Box 84, Sumner Welles MSS., Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York;
 - 41 Laurel Leff, *Buried by the Times: The Holocaust and America's Most Important Newspaper* (Cambridge, 2005), *passim*.
 - 42 Sulzberger to Krock, Dec. 24, 1942, Box 56, Arthur Krock MSS., Princeton University Library, Princeton, New Jersey; Monty Noam Penkower, *The Jews Were*

- Expendable: Free World Diplomacy and the Holocaust* (Urbana, 1983), pp. 91, 98-121, 148; *New York Times*, Aug. 28, 1943; Oct. 28, 1943; Feb. 1, 1944.
- 43 Horace M. Kallen, "Of Them Which Say They Are Jews," *Contemporary Jewish Record* 7 (Dec., 1944), pp. 588-596; Sulzberger to Kallen, Jan. 16, 1945, Jews and Judaism files, SA.
 - 44 Sulzberger to Frank, Nov. 17, 1942, Jerome N. Frank MSS., Box 70, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut; Sulzberger to Levinthal, Jan. 23, 1942, Palestine and Zionism MSS., SA; Chap. 4; Sulzberger to Rosenwald, Jan. 14, 1947, American Council for Judaism files, SA; Sulzberger to Rosenberg, Jan. 27, 1944, UAHC files, SA; Sulzberger to Silver, Nov. 2, 1943, Sulzberger file, Abba Hillel Silver MSS., The Temple, Cleveland; Silver to Sulzberger, Nov. 9, 1943, Z5/653, CZA; Sulzberger to Billikopf, Jan. 1944, Jews and Judaism files, SA. Silver charged, in addition, that a series of articles in the *Times* by the publisher's nephew, C.L. Sulzberger, creating the impression that a state of tension existed in Palestine, was deliberately designed to strengthen the issuance of a joint Anglo-American statement in mid-1943 against Jewish aspirations in Palestine. This coincided, he noted, with articles about British "arms trials", trials which became a smear attack against the Zionist enterprise. Also see Monty Noam Penkower, *The Holocaust and Israel Reborn: From Catastrophe to Sovereignty* (Urbana, 1994), pp. 145-176.
 - 45 Penkower, *The Jews Were Expendable*, pp. 23-25; *New York Times*, Sept. 29, 1944. Sulzberger was impressed by the distinction drawn by Peter Bergson (alias for Hillel Kook) between "Hebrew Palestinians" and "Jews", but considered this "good talker" dangerous for previously championing a Jewish Army and, together with the official Zionists, was "doing inestimable harm to Jews throughout the world." Sulzberger to Ullman, Palestine and Zionism files, SA. For Kook and his small circle, see Penkower, *The Holocaust and Israel Reborn*, pp. 61-90.
 - 46 *New York Times*, May 1, 1945; *New York Times*, May 8, 1945; July 17, 1945; Sulzberger to Fondiller, Aug. 1, 1945, Palestine and Zionism file, SA; Sulzberger to Welles, Oct. 28, 1944, Sumner Welles file, SA; Sulzberger to R. Straus, June 7, 1946; Sulzberger to Daniel, Sept. 5, 1946; both in Palestine and Zionism files, SA; Bruce J. Evensen, *Truman, Palestine, and the Press: Shaping Conventional Wisdom at the Beginning of the Cold War* (New York, 1992), p. 34.
 - 47 Oct. 26, 1946 speech, Jews and Judaism files, SA; Jan. 9, 1947 note of New Orleans remarks; Sulzberger to Inverchapel, Dec. 18, 1946; both in Palestine and Zionism files, SA.
 - 48 Epstein memo of Jan. 28 conversation, Feb. 3, 1947, A263/8, CZA; Sulzberger to Lazaron, Apr. 22, 1947, Palestine and Zionism files, SA. Epstein lost no time in expressing to Sulzberger his thanks for the "frank" exchange of views. He so informed C.L. Sulzberger, a long-time acquaintance of Epstein's who had highly recommended his friend to the publisher. Sulzberger to C.L. Sulzberger, Jan. 28, 1947; C.L. Sulzberger to Sulzberger, Feb. 5, 1947; both in Elath file, SA. The nephew seconded his uncle's position. C.L. Sulzberger to Sulzberger, Feb. 6, 1947, Palestine and Zionism files, SA. That July, Epstein gave Sulzberger a memo by the Jewish Agency legal expert Jacob Robinson in favor of partition. Epstein to Sulzberger, July

- 25, 1947, Palestine files, SA. For McCormick's pro-Magnes stance while serving as a consultant during World War II to the State Department's Post war and Territorial Committees, see Penkower, *Decision on Palestine Deferred*, pp. 147, 211.
- 49 *New York Times*, Sept. 1, 1947; Sulzberger to Magnes, Sept. 16, 1947, Magnes file, SA; Sulzberger to Greenbaum, Mar. 19, 1947, Jews and Judaism files, SA; Sulzberger to Finkelstein, Nov. 26, 1947, Strauss II, Box 216, Louis S. Strauss MSS., Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, West Branch, Iowa Hoover Library; Agronsky to Eytan, Oct. 1947, file HZ-92/37, Israel State Archives (hereafter ISA), Jerusalem; Sulzberger to Bernstein, Nov. 3, 1947, Jews and Judaism files, SA; Magnes to Sulzberger, Nov. 27, 1947; Magnes to Hexter, Dec. 1, 1947; both in Maurice Hexter MSS., file 11/12, AJA.
- 50 *New York Times*, Dec. 1, 1947.
- 51 Sulzberger to Levy, Feb. 9, 1948, Palestine and Zionism files, SA; Epstein to James, Jan. 12, 1948, HZ – 126/7, ISA; Epstein to Sulzberger, Jan. 14, 1948; Palestine and Zionism files, SA; Epstein to Sulzberger, Feb. 23, 1948, HZ -- 126/7, ISA; Shertok to the Editor, Feb. 17, 1948, HZ – 95/6, ISA; *New York Times*, Jan. 26, 1948; Feb. 18, 20, 1948; Epstein to Sulzberger, Mar. 8, 1948, Palestine and Zionism files, SA.
- 52 Tuvim to Sternstein, Feb. 10, 1948, and memo, Feb. 8, 1948; both in HZ – 70/9, ISA; Tift and Jones, *The Trust*, p. 237.
- 53 Epstein to Jewish Agency Executive, Mar. 5, 1948, Jewish Agency files, Rose Halprin MSS., Hadassah Archives, New York City. A *Times* editorial, four days later, reflected some of the points suggested by Epstein. Epstein to Lourie and Shertok, Mar. 8, 1948, HZ – 126/7, ISA.
- 54 Akzin to Tuvim, Mar. 17, 1948, HZ – 70/9, ISA; Mordecai Kaplan diary, Mar. 17, 1948, AJA. My thanks to Fred Krome for a copy of this entry.
- 55 Sulzberger to Reston, Mar. 17, 1948; Reston to Sulzberger, Mar. 23, 1948; both in Palestine and Zionism files, SA.
- 56 *New York Times*, Mar. 21, 1948; Epstein to Sulzberger, Mar. 22, 1948, HZ – 126/7, ISA.
- 57 *New York Times*, Mar. 28, 1948; Sulzberger to Gildersleeve, Apr. 30, 1948; Calvert to Sulzberger, Apr. 14, 1948; Sulzberger memo, May 5, 1948; Sulzberger to Greenbaum, Apr. 14, 1948; all in Palestine and Zionism files, SA; Sulzberger memo, May 10, 1948, Box 58, Krock, MSS.
- 58 Tift and Jones, *The Trust*, p. 257; Leff, *Buried by the Times*, p. 328.
- 59 Sulzberger to children, Dec. 15, 1959, Jews and Judaism files, SA; Sulzberger to Finkelstein, Nov. 26, 1947, Box 216, Strauss II, Strauss MSS.; Sulzberger to Finkelstein, Mar. 1, 1948, Louis Finkelstein MSS., Ratner Center, Jewish Theological Seminary, New York City; Sulzberger to Miles, Apr. 30, 1948; Sulzberger to Greenbaum, Apr. 13, 1949; both in Jews and Judaism files, SA. Iphigene Sulzberger later claimed that her husband resigned from She'arith Israel when he noticed that the Israeli flag was displayed on a stage alongside the American flag at an anniversary celebration. *Jerusalem Post*, May 14, 1971. On the other hand, Rabbi Marc Angel of She'arith Israel heard from Tamar De Sola Pool that the pro-Zionist sermons of her husband, David De Sola Pool (rabbi of that congregation during 1907-1956), had led to

- Sulzberger's resignation. Sulzberger's daughter Ruth did not even know that he had been a member of She'arith Israel, where he occasionally attended services on the High Holy Days. Only in 1994 did the congregation's board agree to the presence in the sanctuary of an Israeli flag alongside an American flag. The Israeli flag was given as a gift by Rabbi and Mrs. Marc Angel on the occasion of his silver anniversary with the congregation. Angel to Penkower, May 17, 2004; June 22 and 23, 2004.
- 60 Sulzberger to Epstein, Feb. 1, 1949; Sulzberger to Epstein, May 12, 1949; Sulzberger to Cohn, Oct. 30, 1950; all in Israel files, SA; Sulzberger to Rosenwald, Jan. 30, 1952; Sulzberger to Sussman, Dec. 4, 1959; Sulzberger to Arshat, Mar. 30, 1961; all in American Council for Judaism files, SA.
 - 61 Samuel Freedman, "In the Diaspora: Abe Rosenthal, American Jew," *Jerusalem Post*, May 16, 2006; Joseph C. Goulden, *A.M. Rosenthal and His Times* (Secaucus, 1988), pp. 48-50; Sulzberger to Spiegel, Sept. 2, 1952; Sulzberger to Dryfoos, Apr. 1, 1958; both in Jews and Judaism files, SA. When Spiegel died in 1977, the newspaper's headline over a long story noted: "Expert on Jewish Affairs was 69." *New York Times*, Apr. 1, 1977. And when Catledge's first appointments in the "bullpen" happened to be Jews, Sulzberger told him, "Let's don't go from a Catholic bullpen to a Jewish bullpen." Turner Catledge, *My Life and The Times* (New York, 1971), p. 215.
 - 62 C. Sulzberger to Sulzberger, Aug. 19, 1948, Israel files, SA; *New York Times*, Feb. 27, 1949; Ben-Gurion to Sulzberger, May 31, 1951; Sulzberger to Adler *et al.*, June 1, 1951; both in Israel files, SA; *New York Times*, May 26, 30, 1950; Eban to Sulzberger, Nov. 14, 1952, Israel files, SA; Harman to Bender, Jan. 14, 1953, RG 93, file 2471/7, ISA; *New York Times*, Oct. 19, 1953; Elath to Frankfurter, June 8, 1956, A264/50, CZA.
 - 63 Y.H.L. to A.S.E./D.G., July 20, 1953, RG 93, file 2472/1, ISA; *New York Times*, Oct. 19, 1953; Zinder to Catledge, Jan. 8, 1954, RG 93, file 2472/3, ISA; *New York Times*, Sept. 1, 1954; Nov. 5, 1957; Jan. 19, 1957; Dec. 8, 1959.
 - 64 Sulzberger to Cohen, Aug. 16, 1954, Jews and Judaism files, SA; Sulzberger to Catledge, Nov. 16, 1955, Israel files, SA; Sulzberger to Dryfoos, Apr. 11, 1957, American Jewish Congress file, SA; Sulzberger to Epstein, Dec. 23, 1957, Elath file, SA; Sulzberger to Hurwitz, Jan. 13, 1959, Box 57, Henry Hurwitz MSS, AJA; Sulzberger to Pratt, n.d., attached to Feb. 1959, Israel files, SA.
 - 65 Sulzberger notes, Nov. 1959, Jews and Judaism files, SA. The citations are from Matthew Arnold, *Literature and Dogma* (1873) and William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (c. 1601).
 - 66 Sulzberger note, Dec. 15, 1959, Box 17, Edward Greenbaum MSS., Princeton University Library; Sulzberger drafts, Dec. 15, 1959; Nov. 8, 1962 (retyped Oct. 20, 1964); Sept. 10, 1963; all in Jews and Judaism files, SA.
 - 67 Tifft and Jones, "The Family," pp. 50-51; Gay Talese, *The Kingdom and the Power* (New York, 1969), pp. 91-92; I.L. Kenen, *Israel's Defense Line, Her Friends and Foes in Washington* (Buffalo, 1981), p. 207; Leff, *Buried by the Times*, p. 27; A. O. Sulzberger interview, Nov. 10, 1983, AJCOH. Upon Rosenthal's death in May 2006 at the age of 84, a former *Times* reporter observed that, aside from his major achievements until an abrupt dismissal in 1999, Rosenthal "had done more than

any one individual to reconcile the *Times* to its Jewish identity.” Freedman, “In the Diaspora.” In these same years, other major executives who were Jews included Max Frankel, Joseph Lelyveld, and Arthur Gelb; Thomas Friedman would head the Jerusalem bureau, while Ari Goldman became the first Sabbath observer to join the reporting staff.

- 68 *From Iphigene*, pp. 274-275; Sulzberger to Catledge and Merz, Apr. 13, 1961, Jews and Judaism files, SA; Sulzberger to Golden, June 5, 1967, Anti-Semitism files, SA; *New York Times*, Dec. 12, 1968.
- 69 *New York Times*, Dec. 12, 1968; Shephard, *The Paper's Papers*, p. 303; Tift and Jones, “The Family,” p. 49; Sulzberger statement, Nov. 8, 1962 (retyped Oct. 20, 1964), Jews and Judaism files, SA.
- 70 Laurel Leff, “A Tragic ‘Fight in the Family’: *The New York Times*, Reform Judaism and the Holocaust,” *American Jewish History* 88 (Mar. 2000), 51; Tift and Jones, “The Family,” p. 45.
- 71 Leff, “A Tragic ‘Fight in the Family,’” 28-29; Brickner to Wise, Apr. 3, 1942, RG 49, file 7/7, AJA; Steinberg to Godwin, Feb. 5, 1946, Milton Steinberg MSS., Box 19, AJHS; Sulzberger to Elath, Apr. 2, 1962, Elath file, SA. Steinberg’s well-selling and favorably received book *A Partisan Guide to the Jewish Problem* (New York, 1945), although analyzing the postwar rehabilitation of European Jewry, antisemitism, and Zionism, was passed over for review and relegated by the *Times*’s editors to the Sunday Book Review Section under “religious books recently issued.” Steinberg to Van Gelder, Dec. 13, 1945, Box 19, Steinberg MSS., AJHS.
- 72 Tift and Jones, *The Trust*, pp. 447-448; *New York Times*, Dec. 12, 1968.

The Silences of Bialik

I

ON THE EVE OF YOM KIPPUR 5692, SEPTEMBER 20, 1931, JEWRY'S national bard, Hayim Nahman Bialik, mailed off "Re'itikhem Shuv B'Kotser Yedkhem" ("I Have Seen You Anew in Your Limited Power") to *Moznayim*, the literary monthly that he had founded two years earlier in Tel Aviv. He had composed a first draft of this "thing," Bialik informed journal editor Pinhas Lahover, while attending the World Zionist Congress in Basle the previous July. At the request of friends, particularly Lahover and Ya'akov Fikhman of the Hebrew Writers' Association in Israel, he then prepared what was "perhaps a poem or an essay — resembling 'a mouse that is half earth'" — for publication. If not for the urging of Lahover and Fikhman, who could now do with it as they saw fit, he might have spent more days on the forty-nine lines; the present version, he felt, bore additional defects that required correction, "and God will forgive me."¹

"Re'itikhem," later generally referred to as "The Congress Poem," ended the poetic silence that Bialik had maintained since World War I. That muteness followed many stanzas that reflect the artist's inability to find solace either in his individual talent or in his God. Instead, since departing Odessa for Berlin in 1921 and then moving permanently to Tel Aviv in 1924, the poet of his people's risorgimento became preoccupied with the concept of *kinus*, the collection of diverse elements of Jewish culture from the Diaspora. His effort commenced with gathering and editing the work of the great Hebrew poets of medieval Spain, as well as the legends of rabbinic tradition. Bialik also chaired the Hebrew Language Council, wrote essays on literature, established the Dvir publishing house, championed the new Hebrew University on Jerusalem's Mt. Scopus, and created the popular Oneg Shabbat Saturday afternoon gatherings for his secularized contemporaries. In addition, he undertook Zionist-sponsored missions to the United States (1926) and London (1931) and promoted Hebrew culture during visits to the Continent when ill health forced him from 1928 on to spend his summers in treatment at Karlsbad and similar centers.²

His stilled poetic pen notwithstanding, the yishuv (Jewish settlement in Palestine) bestowed many honors on the man they considered a seer.

An anecdote tells of two children who spotted him in a barbershop in Tel Aviv. One said: "There's Bialik!" "Don't be silly," his friend replied: "Bialik is a street name." Marc Chagall, who came from Paris for the opening of the new Tel Aviv Museum in early 1931, reminisced that Bialik was "the spiritual leader of the city." People gravitated to his home, consulted him on Hebrew terminology, discussed his every word and movement. "Why do you not write more?" the painter queried his host: "You should be happy. Eretz Israel is not a ghetto. You are the first Jewish poet. About you the Jewish land shines like gold. Young girls and boys, burned in the sun, look at you. Around your house bearded Jews work and await your word, your look. The fragrance of the orange gardens makes you drunk and recalls your first love. Why do you not write? Write with the Lord's goodwill. And if you have to stop your speeches and public activities as a result, surely they will forgive you for that." Concluded Chagall: "He was silent."³

By then, Bialik had come under attack from some younger spirits associated with the Hebrew Writers' Association. Eliezer Steinman and Avraham Shlonsky, editors of the group's *Ketuvim*, used its pages to criticize Bialik's support of Hebrew and Yiddish as "a marriage made in heaven." Bialik resigned from the organization and privately castigated the collaborators of *Ketuvim* (which soon became an independent magazine of "Hebrew writers") as "a nest of insects, where all the cripples and epileptics are gathered." The feud escalated once Shlonsky, twenty-seven years Bialik's junior, thought that monies intended for *Ketuvim* had been transferred by Bialik to Dvir and *Moznayim*; the accusation, which reached Bialik, infuriated the young man's onetime admirer. Further, Shlonsky's poetry began to mark the transition from the didactic, naturalist style of the European period, mirrored in Bialik's oeuvre, to the symbolic, expressionist types by which Modernism would enter the literature of the yishuv. The latter embraced an individualistic, "de-theologized" Hebrew verse, free as well of the collective nationalist orientation of Bialik's school. In the eyes of this young guard, the time of Zionism's bard, currently the advocate of *kinus* and of the Hebrew Writers' Association establishment, had come and gone.⁴

Nor could Bialik escape the mounting tensions between Labor adherents on the political Left and Vladimir (Ze'ev) Jabotinsky's stalwarts on the Right, an animosity that threatened to rive Zionist ranks. Jabotinsky's translation into Russian of the bard's "B'Ir HaHareiga" ("In the City of Slaughter"), a pathbreaking assault on alleged Jewish passivity during the Kishinev pogrom of 1903, had inspired Russian Jewish youth to organize for self-defense

thereafter; his later translation of a selection of Bialik's verse went into five editions between 1911 and 1915, with a sixth published in Berlin in 1922. Yet a greatly appreciative Bialik could not forgive Jabotinsky for breaking with the World Zionist Organization (WZO) in 1923, creating the World Union of Zionist-Revisionists two years later on the platform that Palestine on both sides of the Jordan River should become the Jewish commonwealth, possessing a Jewish majority and a strong army against understandable Arab opposition. The charismatic Revisionist leader was "a precious man, a great man," the poet admitted to Yohanan Pogrovinski, his personal secretary and an avid Revisionist, "who could have become a crown to our head." Bialik, however, favored the moderate stance of WZO President Chaim Weizmann, with whom he shared a close affinity for the teachings of ideologue Ahad HaAm (Asher Ginsberg), and could not tolerate strident Revisionist propaganda against the WZO chief.⁵

Bialik's friendship with Jabotinsky, whom he had "loved and valued," came to a sudden end in Berlin. At a reception in the latter's honor, Bialik was asked to speak. Not wishing to imply that he agreed with the militant positions taken that evening, he rose to make this point: "Knowing that you, Jabotinsky, are a good Zionist and your intentions are pure, my benediction is that you will suffer a political downfall in everything to which you turn, because your defeat will be a Zionist victory." Given the inevitable split that ensued, Bialik chose not to attend a farewell party in Eretz Israel for Jabotinsky in 1926, at which the Revisionist quoted the absentee's line that "there is one sun in the sky, one song in the heart." Jabotinsky then went on, in like vein, to insist that the Zionist blue-and-white banner allowed no room for the Red (pro-Soviet ideology) of his leftist opposition. "Zionism," the speaker ended unequivocally, is "a movement for sovereignty and rule, a moral conquest."⁶

"Bialik is already lost to us and will not return," Jabotinsky lectured to audiences across Europe the following year. Yet, he exhorted, Bialik's earlier poetry and subsequent silence represented a call to Jewish youth, our last hope, from which new poets would emerge. Not long thereafter, *HaAretz* published articles alleging that Jabotinsky had submitted to a British demand that he abstain from political activity as a condition for receiving a Palestinian resident visa. A group of Jabotinsky's friends proclaimed a boycott against that newspaper, causing several prominent Hebrew writers, headed by Bialik and Yehoshua Ravnitski (Bialik's coeditor of the *Sefer HaAgada* and Jabotinsky's first teacher of Hebrew), to publish an indignant protest against the boycott. Deeply hurt at their stance in the face of the unwarranted slur against his

integrity, the Revisionist head broke off personal relations with Bialik — “who forgot,” Jabotinsky wrote to Ravnitski, “what a decent man should not have forgotten” — and all the other signatories. The schism between the two men was final.⁷

Actually, Bialik declared on various occasions his admiration for the *halutz* (pioneer) workers. At the 1921 World Zionist Congress he hailed the politically leftist youngsters, whose unremitting dedication to labor was creating a “new life” for Jewry, providing it with a revolutionary vision of strength and health. The stirring words strongly touched Labor ideologue Berl Katznelson, who marveled that Bialik expressed that which “we should say and do not know how to say . . . as a nation.” Going further, the poet wrote in 1924 that the pioneers were the one “truly holy, moral” party in the yishuv, whose hard, long path would alone bring a people’s redemption and revival. Editor Katznelson approved his suggestion of the name *Davar* for Labor’s newspaper; acceding to a request from that movement’s youth magazine, Bialik also composed a brief poem for *BaMa’aleh* that, extolling the virtues of work, achieved anthem-like status. In the hands of the workers’ Histadrut organization, he announced at its third convention, lay the yishuv’s fate.⁸

Yet the bard continued to persist in the role of an independent, scolding the Zionist endeavor when he saw fit. At the same 1921 Congress, Bialik had warned the secular Left not to disdain the religious Orthodox, who “protected us and our Torah — the historical right that we have to Eretz Israel.” The entire movement, he declared, continued to neglect matters cultural. Five years later, he rued the fact that literature was losing its value and its influence on the Hebrew nation, which hitherto had understood that “the book was, in the end, the one thread which unites us throughout the world.” The worker, however, identified solely with books that related to his interests, not appreciating that “literature claims no parties.” “Greatness,” he asserted before the Hebrew Writers’ Association, was the need of the hour.⁹

Bialik’s call encouraged the Right, not the Left. Uri Zvi Greenberg, the Labor poet turned fervent Revisionist, whose fiery verse heralding the messianic restoration of the Kingdom of Israel was especially anathema to the Left, welcomed the charge to “greatness.” Writing in *Davar*, the thirty-one-year-old militant noted that the association, “whose head phylactery was Bialik,” had to listen to “their rabbi’s Torah.” Bialik admittedly paid little attention to Greenberg’s political onslaughts, preferring to focus on the immense literary gifts of the individual he considered to be “the poet of our generation.” Katznelson, *per contra*, insisted that the Hebrew writer had to

“feel the life-needs of the nation,” not distinguishing between “good taste, beauty and talent” on the one hand and “the sense of citizenship in the nation and the Zionist movement” on the other. Hence his critique of Bialik and other intellectuals who, by not expressing support for the workers in their struggle against the farmers of Petah Tikva, strengthened the halutzim’s feeling of solitude.¹⁰

Filled with anxiety over the escalating strife between Right and Left, Bialik sought at the beginning of 1928 to calm the waters. At the dedication of the communal hall in Hadera, he observed that because the national home in Eretz Israel was joined to the building of the Jewish nation, every step had to be measured lest ruin ensue. Ancient Jerusalem, after all, met with destruction because the city’s Jews engaged in needless hatred and hewed strictly to law. All parties, he went on, possess their own *Shulhan Arukh* (Code of Law), and each feels obligated to “kill and be killed” for every jot and tittle of its own law. “Do not be overrighteous,” Bialik cautioned: “It is better to transgress the Code of Law for the sake of building the land and not to insist on the justness of one side or another.”¹¹ The valiant effort fell on deaf ears.

For his part, Greenberg threw down the gauntlet in November 1927, with a long essay for *Davar* called “Kelapei Tish'im V'Tish'a” (“Against Ninety-nine”), whose subtitle audaciously cries out: “Hey, Bialik, Where Are You?” Literature that arises out of the “pressure and starvation” of the transitional process from an “extraterritorial Judaism to sovereign Hebraism” must serve the nation, he averred. All of this “redeeming” literature had to be fully subjugated to those who are battle committed. Ninety-nine percent of our writers, Greenberg continued, focus on individual, “fine,” limited literature, with only 1 percent seeing reality. Bialik’s had been “a lion’s roar” in the past, every word “bare,” every combination of letters “explosive dynamite.” But now he was silent. Bialik was and remained “the first splendorous ‘temple’ in the realm of Hebrew poetry,” concludes Greenberg; younger poets would now make their own mark. The author A. Z. Rabinowitz (AZAR) retorted that while it was a pity that Bialik had stopped writing poetry, a poet could not be pushed by others to write; Greenberg stood his ground.¹²

One year later, Greenberg expanded on this theme in his verse collection *Kelev Bayit* (*Domesticated Dog*). Two poems, both entitled “Bialik,” bemoan the absence of “blood-stained, ruffian-poets” (*demumei haDam, paitanim-biryonim*) in the Jewish homeland. Even Bialik — the former genius of “the poetry of wrath” — had built himself a palace and become a teller of parables and stories at every gathering, wedding, and funeral. This good-hearted soul,

“placing sugar in front of the blazing furnace,” currently spent his days on business affairs, *Oneg Shabbat*, and the banquets of friends. Could Bialik be compared to the great commander who, having gathered legions to revolt with drawn sword, betrayed the cause? The poet’s “Poems of Wrath” were now relegated to bookstores. “Arise, the organ of Hebrew poetry!” implores the second poem: chase away those seated around your ordered table, burn down the palace that is a prison, swallow the flame with physical joy. Tell the image of the Divine presence, to be seen on the ruin of ashes, that you are impoverished, with but one shirt to your skin, and that is good. She will reply: “I have loved you, my son / I am yours and you are again mine.” And Greenberg ends: “you will go out in the land as does the lion!”¹³

Bialik did not respond to the challenge. Greenberg’s collection that same year, *Hazon Ehad HaLigyonot* (*Vision of One of the Legions*), with its clarion appeal for the establishment of a Jewish armed force to conquer Eretz Israel, elicited no reaction. While Shlonsky criticized articles heralding Italian Fascism (“the ism of the fist”) by Greenberg associate Abba Ahimeir in *Do’ar HaYom*, which turned into a Revisionist mouthpiece after Jabotinsky purchased it in fall 1928, Bialik kept mum. In reaction to attacks by Jabotinsky and others against the Hebrew University the following year, he privately expressed warm esteem as “your devoted friend” to Chancellor Judah Magnes (proponent of a bi-national state in Palestine). Unlike Jabotinsky and others, Bialik also supported Weizmann in his efforts to enlist wealthy American non-Zionists in the reorganized Jewish Agency for Palestine.¹⁴

Arab riots against the yishuv in August 1929 shook Bialik, particularly the butchery of ultra-Orthodox Jews in Hebron and Safed, but he thought “worst of all the suspicion that we are the guilty ones.” His reference, in a letter from Europe, to “foolish youngsters and confused hearts” stemmed from reports that the riots had followed a march by some of Jabotinsky’s Betar youth organization to Jerusalem’s Western (“Wailing”) Wall on Tish’a B’Av, although they had been warned that such a protest would infuriate Palestine’s Arabs. Jabotinsky could have accomplished much had he remained with the World Zionist Organization, Bialik confided to Pogrovinski, but the influence of his evil advisers and the coarse rejection by the WZO’s own “wise leaders” fused to create the sorry parting. Regrettably, he added, because we have not succeeded in concentrating among ourselves the elect, “matters in all areas are so depressing.” A disheartened Bialik, afflicted at this point by kidney stones, turned his energies to raising funds abroad for the publishing ventures dearest to him, to writing some legends for children, and

to preparing a commentary to the first part of the Mishna.¹⁵

A London trip in February 1931 did yield a poem about his saintly widowed mother and the significant, if brief, “Gam B’Hit’aroto L’Eineikhem” (“Even When in Your Eyes He Struck Roots”). The second poem, Bialik’s possible reply both to Shlonsky *et al.*, who considered the poet a has-been, and to Greenberg’s urging that he bestir himself as a lion, announces that he would yet deride critics mercilessly. They would fail to discover him in the hiding places of his rhymes, which also were but a cover for his secrets. Just as between closed lattices, an “inflamed and scheming lion will peep through their lines,” “a fiery roar restrained in his bones.” One evening, Bialik goes on to inform his readers, a sudden, thunderous echo will alarm you during your sweet sleep. The lion shall escape to his birthplace and appear on the crest of a cliff: “His entire being will proclaim: King! / His eyes will burn with mockery and his nose smell of prey / And the cry of his freedom will make the roots of the mountains tremble.”¹⁶

With that propitious moment still undetermined, Bialik first had to attend to pressing financial matters. He could not avoid the declining fortunes of Dvir, which forced him that June to stop employing Pogrovinski (with salary yet due). The embittered poet, reminisced his secretary of more than five years, had lost the will and the skill to work; he left letters unanswered or replied tersely and in total quiet. Hoping for improvement, Bialik agreed to the idea proposed by Ben-Zion Katz and Nahum Twersky, then with the Steibel publishing house, that Twersky and he visit Poland and Lithuania to raise funds for the two firms. Though seriously ill, Bialik fixated on the need to bolster his primary cause — Hebrew. Eretz Israel, he understood, with 175,000 out of the 15 million Jews worldwide, had become the center for that language, boasting the majority of its writers and poets. The same trip could also be used for a visit to medical specialists and the Karlsbad health spa. “My heart tells me,” a shocked Pogrovinski heard him say, “that I shall not return from one of my trips abroad.”¹⁷

But first Bialik would attend the seventeenth World Zionist Congress in Basle. Two days before leaving Tel Aviv for that conclave, he candidly expressed his anxiety to a large group of visitors. The movement, he admitted, faced great peril owing to the perverse anti-Zionist policy of Great Britain’s Labour government, but this was not the fault of the man who gave us “the glittering victories” (Weizmann). The world had returned to chaos, including the European country where already one heard the triumphant cry of “the Haman ben Hamdata of our generation” (Hitler) and the evil winds that were

sweeping Eretz Israel. Someone says that Weizmann is guilty, remove him, and our knocking on the table will frighten the Colonial Office. Another (Jabotinsky), filled with hate since 1923 and an ignoramus in politics, “whets swords” with a few survivors and announces that salvation will come after Weizmann’s departure. Men of religion (the Mizrahi Zionist Party) also come to prepare their slaughtering knives to complete the sacrifice. “My heart tells me,” he warned the hushed group, that if all these will be our deliverers, “then alas and alack are we.”¹⁸

What Bialik witnessed at Basle proved even worse than his earlier fears. Jabotinsky, joined by Mizrahi, the so-called Radicals, and even some centrist General Zionists, excoriated Weizmann’s policy, which was based on the fundamental need for maximum cooperation with the British government. “You have sat too long at English feasts,” thundered Stephen Wise on behalf of the American acolytes of U.S. Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis. Given the impossibility of a Jewish majority in the immediate future, the WZO president defended the steady development of “dunam by dunam and man by man” to create the conditions for realistic political demands. A newspaper interview, in the course of which Weizmann declared that a majority was not required to develop Jewish civilization and culture, sealed his fate. Facing the passage of a vote of censure against the interview, he left the building.

The presidency shifted to the aged Nahum Sokolow, but Jabotinsky failed to have the congress endorse a Jewish majority and a Jewish State as the final aim of Zionism. Having been defeated in his bid to capture the executive, the Revisionist leader tore up his delegate card and stormed out of the hall. “Completely broken,” Weizmann privately flayed the “old, proven Zionists, contaminated by vanity, jealousy, vindictiveness, and pettiness,” as well as opponents who were animated by “hatred, vendetta, trickery and treachery.” His one comfort was the appearance at the Congress of thirty-two-year-old laborite Haim Arlosoroff, whom he personally praised as “a leader of great talent” who would bring a great future to the Zionist movement.¹⁹

Although the Jewish Agency Executive would continue to act along Weizmannite lines, with Arlosoroff becoming head of its political department, the Congress debacle horrified Bialik. At the start of the proceedings, he had recommended to the WZO’s weekly magazine that Weizmann continue to direct political policy and Jabotinsky handle all matters of propaganda. As the Congress went on, he poured out his loathing of the deliberations in letters to his wife Manya and close friends. Finding solace only in the Labor faction

and especially Arlosoroff, whom Bialik publicly kissed after his eloquent defense of the embattled Weizmann, the poet resorted time and again in his correspondence to the words *abomination*, *swamp*, and *filth*. “Revisionism,” made up of feeble, narrow elderly and arrogant, confused, empty-minded youth, found allies in “every leper, every unclean person, prattler, and gossip” and in the dregs of the other political camps. In the end, Bialik told Ravnitski, “it was a Congress of epileptics and the insane.”²⁰

Especially galling was the bard’s continued failure to obtain funds from the Congress for the Hebrew Language Council. Thanks to his influence, the relevant committee made a positive commitment, but the delegates rejected the appropriation at a late session. Though not an official participant, Bialik then received permission to address the Congress on the matter. Demanding an immediate allocation of 250 pounds sterling for the Council, he lambasted those present for the WZO’s past disparagement of Jewry’s cultural needs. The short speech secured his request, yet the resolution would not be fulfilled. Neglecting the Hebrew book and our rich traditions, he told a gathering in Basle, the movement will sin by “educating Zionists without Zionism.” None of the springs of Karlsbad and Marienbad would cleanse away “the shame” of the last congress upon Zionism — so was his final judgment to Shmaryahu Levin.²¹

“Satan, who is dancing among us, triumphed this time,” Bialik wrote to an aggrieved Weizmann toward the end of August. An “iniquitous spirit and complete lunacy” pervaded the Congress, which ungratefully dismissed the man who had brought Jewry the “two most precious gifts” — the Balfour Declaration and the Jewish Agency. “You have risen sevenfold in my esteem,” the lengthy missive pronounced, and you must overcome despair. An invitation to Weizmann from South African Zionists had to be accepted as a first step to purify the air from the Revisionist mold. The latter’s demagogic propaganda, Bialik advised, could be counteracted with an extensive program of cultural and educational work in the Diaspora. A small “holy covenant” of individuals, uniting the nation’s creative powers, would thus raise again and forever the flag of “spiritual renaissance” in Israel. This undertaking would best gain for Zionism honor and recognition throughout the Diaspora, which would not be sated much longer with empty phrases, exaggerations, and constant demands for money. The last Congress revealed the sin of neglect — and its punishment. Weizmann now had the opportunity to ruminate on the matter and to draw the lesson. In deep admiration, the writer prayed that the lesson would not again be in vain.²²

Finally, before leaving Karlsbad for his trip to Poland, Bialik put some additional touches on “Re’itikhem Shuv B’Kotser Yedkhem.” One month later, he sent it off to *Moznayim*. The day after Yom Kippur, he wrote to Manya, who had returned to Palestine: “I fixed up a poem that I had hastily written while in Basle, but it was unripe.” Ravnitski or Yehuda Kaufman (later Even-Shmuel) could explain the final version if she found it hard to understand.²³ Little did Bialik sense the storm that would shortly follow.

II

The manuscript that arrived at *Moznayim*’s office breathed vitriol. Its opening lines (“I have seen you anew in your limited power and my heart is a bowl of tears / How you suddenly became wretched, how you became helpless! / How you were left alone, at a loss for counsel and direction”) quickly shift to wonder: “Who gathered the joy of liberation from your eyes, extinguished the spark of its fire? / Why did your voice become degraded today and your speech so vile?” Darkness takes over dawn; hope and laughter are destroyed; the strength of young men is replaced by vanity, disgrace, a sirocco wind. Confusion, chaff, and refuse stream from every forum, converting precious alliterations into appalling meanness and abomination. The poet’s bile then spews forth:

Who spread leprosy to rot your flesh, epileptic prophets?
Unclean of heart those who sanctify themselves, seven
abominations and eight insects in their hearts,
Those who cry out all day, gripped by spasm and enraged, for
the great things,
And when they seize all in their mouths and demand it from
their fellowman,
Their soul shouts, and their hand reaches for the reward, as if
they had already achieved it?

Bialik presses on against whoever let loose a company of “cutting pen and speech,” consumed by enmity and jealousy and fouling everything holy with the emptiness of their mouths and their fingers’ touch. The queries continue: Who permitted your organization, why does your rearguard tarry, and where is the commander’s voice hidden? A solution is suggested: God may return you tomorrow, in shame, to the path of hardship in order to test you and make you

suffer until you reach the table of nations, divinely redeemed. And if you all are helpless to save your souls, the bard ponders, is there not one man of valor in Judah, a noble prince pure of heart who will seize you by the fringes of your head and shake you strongly so that your spirit and strength will be revived and you stand erect? Reordering his first three lines, Bialik closes by repeating the title: "I have seen you anew in your limited power."²⁴

Ben-Zion Katz, a veteran journalist and editor who saw the manuscript, sought to delay its appearance for two weeks. The individual who had successfully outmaneuvered Russian censorship in order to print Bialik's "B'Ir HaHareiga" in St. Petersburg's *HaZeman* thought "Re'itikhem" a harsh attack against the Revisionists. Ravnitski agreed with his proposal to hold off until Katz could express the personal opinion to Bialik that some harsh phrases against a personality like Jabotinsky were forbidden and should be excised. The poet replied by letter that Katz's fears were completely unjustified, the lines hinting at other matters entirely, and he cabled Lahover to publish "Re'itikhem" as it stood. In the meantime, he read the poem to a leftist HaShomer HaTsa'ir conference in Poland. Two days after *Moznayim* featured it on October 22, 1931, Bialik sought to calm Many, noting that the verses were intended against "known literary matters" and that publication entailed no danger. Indeed, news circulated from Warsaw that "Re'itikhem," as Bialik told Revisionist poet Ya'akov Cohen, was directed against Shlonsky and his crowd.²⁵

Shlonsky actually fired the first salvo within two weeks in *Ketuvim*, whose members thought that Bialik was behind the Hebrew Writers' Association decision that they could be readmitted as individuals but not as a united group. Under a pseudonym, he charged that half of the work by the barren writer (a cruel double entendre for Bialik's poetic silence and his not having children) should be dismissed in light of its excess of invective. The latter quantity resulted from a defect in quality, signaling "a lack of strength, hysteria." Bialik had similarly attacked Second Aliya author Yosef Haim Brenner years ago, observed Shlonsky, and now it was the Revisionists' turn. Playing on the title of "Re'itikhem," his mordant review concluded by addressing Bialik: "We have seen you anew in your limited power and are very ashamed."²⁶

Four days later, *HaAretz* published Bialik's letter to Katz in order to clarify matters, which then triggered a long response from Yitshak Lofban, editor of the Mapai Labor Party's *HaPoel HaTsa'ir*. Who gave Katz permission to intervene as if Bialik were their "business agent?" he asked, hinting at rumors that *Moznayim*'s editors were worried lest publication of "Re'itikhem" harm Bialik's trip abroad to raise funds for their empty coffers. Katz, a General

Zionist, fired back that his only interest was to avoid civil strife. Phrases like “unclean of heart,” “cry for the great things,” and “seize all” were unjust to Jabotinsky, he pointed out to Bialik, especially when appearing in a poem signed “Basle, July,” and thus tied in the yishuv’s mind to what had transpired at the last Zionist Congress. Katz wished to make Bialik’s letter public, so that the poem would not become a matter for political controversy. Lofban remained unconvinced.²⁷

Shlonsky returned to the attack at the month’s end under his own name with an extended critique of “Re’itikhem.” First, the string of prophetic-like curses and rebuke contradicted the initial reference to “tears,” suggesting a “poetical and psychological castration.” The Jewish prophets of old, for all their insults, offered comfort and consolation; Bialik’s diatribes, both artificial and impersonal, did not persuade the reader. They suggested, rather, “the courtier poetry of the Bolsheviks.” The hour had come, as with other nations and literatures, to halt the dissolving of the intellect with regard to those who “lubricate rhetoric and hoard the speech of Ever [Hebrew].” This Jew was a precious man, Shlonsky admitted, but in poetry “lyrical tidings, not the Holy Tongue,” were fundamental.²⁸

The harsh tone spurred Shlomo Zemah to enter the fray. Writing in *Moznayim*, this veteran of the Second Aliya agreed that while anyone could critique Bialik’s last work, Shlonsky was unqualified to make an accounting of Hebrew poetry. His own verses should provide content, and if unable to do so, he should be quiet; every word he utters confirms the talmudic adage that “he who charges others may be charging them with his own fault.” Having failed to replace Bialik, he attempts to do so with baseness, haughtiness, and impudence. This will never show us that Bialik is not a great poet but — at most — that Shlonsky has ceased being even a small poet. Now, Zemah harshly ended, he resembles “the lamp wick which, lacking oil, raises soot and smoke, whose smell is bad. And alas!”²⁹

Seeking to put a halt to the uproar as the polemic rolled into 1932, *HaAretz* editor Moshe Glikson theorized that at issue lay a *kulturkampf*. The younger rebels surrounding Shlonsky and *Ketuvim* opposed their elders of the establishment, the former embracing novelty, the latter, *kinus*. Bialik, like the biblical prophets, mixed tears and rebuke; “Re’itikhem” contains the power of his earlier “Poems of Wrath,” Shlonsky’s review notwithstanding. Linking tradition with creativity, Bialik’s verses embodied the national spirit as no other individual had. So, too, did his efforts at *kinus*, which the younger generation continued to ridicule. At present, Glikson added, Bialik was completing a

trip in Eastern and Central Europe, traveling once again as “a claimant and a teacher, one who comforts and provides encouragement.” Therein lay his greatness.³⁰

“From One Extreme to the Other,” published in *Ketuvim* one week later, proved to be Shlonsky’s last retort in this particular conflict. The division of minds, he claimed, was not over Bialik as writer. Finally admitting that he stood at war with Bialik’s *weltanschauung*, Shlonsky stressed that the task of *kinus* undertaken by Dvir belonged to university academics engrossed in the study of the past, with creativity the field of youth living in the present. When *kinus* put the awake to sleep, it stood in the way of creative endeavor: “because of the Western Wall and Rachel’s tomb, people forget Emek Yizrael.” That approach, his “camp” believed, is a sin against life and continuity. One could fight his associates’ position but not turn it into “a conspiracy lacking idea and faith, whose purpose was small jealousy and mean competition.”³¹

Glikson ended their joust by praising “Re’itikhem” and by assuring that he would correct any errors in his analysis if a positive word about Bialik appeared in *Ketuvim*. *Kinus*, he opined, did not hamper creative work. In fact, Dvir had published a number of modern authors, while Bialik constantly spoke out for the neglected Hebrew writer. Room also existed for “revolution,” but the latter would be blessed only if it stood on the ground of national reality. Turning that ground into a wasteland was anarchy; the good gardener did not uproot the trunk from its roots. While producing creative literature, we ought to use our past treasures properly as well. For doing this, Bialik had earned the appreciation of the Jewish masses, personifying as he did the essence of the nation. In his verse, *HaAretz*’s editor pronounced, Jewry’s soul finds its reformation and its expression. He is, therefore, its essence and merits the accolade “the national poet.”³² Thus did the literary thrust and parry draw to a close.

For Jabotinsky, however, “Re’itikhem” proved that all of Bialik’s poetry should be cast to oblivion. “Bialik, Man of the Polemic,” the title of the Revisionist chieftain’s essay in New York’s Yiddish daily *Morning Journal*, claimed that the national bard had exploited poetry for political ends. Whereas Bialik’s earlier work — which the reviewer claimed to have made famous — revolted against the desiccation of Diaspora ghetto life, he now mocked everything that contains the spirit of revolt and boldness. Readers pay attention to “the poet of the past,” forgetting that he is “a very ordinary man” from Russia’s Pale of Settlement. Although “Re’itikhem” does not mention the Revisionists by name, Jabotinsky was happy to accept the honorable status

of adversary, opposing Bialik's harmful embrace of "restraint, humiliation, and surrender." "Synthetic and untrue" (the original draft read "fraudulent and mendacious") dishes, he concluded, should not sustain our youth.³³

Jabotinsky's angry rejoinder did not go unchallenged. One reader of that Yiddish newspaper noted that Bialik had created the immodest Jabotinsky, not the reverse, and that the former had labored more for the good of national Jewish politics than all the Jewish politicians together. The Revisionist had been "struck blind," declared *HaDo'ar* editor Menahem Ribalow in New York, whereas Bialik's "deep Hebrew vision" would never be forgotten. The assault reminded Lahover of Max Nordau's criticism of Ahad HaAm as "only a Jew from the Pale of Settlement" who wrote Hebrew, even though Jabotinsky had once praised Bialik as "the national poet in the full and most exalted meaning of the word." With the lines between poetry and politics rapidly becoming blurred in this altercation, *Moznayim*'s editor warned: "Jews from the Pale or outside it, know your boundaries!"³⁴

In private, Bialik forgave Jabotinsky's outburst. "I do not hate him," he confided to a group of friends. To the contrary, "if he came to me, I would embrace him as a friend and a loved one." The Revisionist leader's politics, however, required the poet to express his strong objection. They were leading the yishuv, he insisted, "from the pit to the trap."³⁵

The subject of the heated controversy returned home sullen and in deep pessimism after almost eight months of travel, speeches, and receptions abroad. The trip had not yielded the financial rewards hoped for. Bialik found the situation of Hebrew culture in Europe to be catastrophic. Jewish youth had withdrawn in Germany, assimilated in Czechoslovakia, and "died already" in Great Britain, Italy, and France. He feared the destruction of Judaism's cultural structure in the Baltic countries and Eastern Europe, with Poland the possible exception. Unless a radical change occurred in this "sleep of forgetfulness," Jewry would lose the right of its existence. Given the dismal condition of Zionism there, he warned Weizmann that the success of a proposed world Jewish conference appeared doubtful.

An entire generation, Bialik told a Tel Aviv audience, is suspended in the air, exuding feelings of powerlessness and despair in the face of extremely limited possibilities. Because no attachment existed to the deep wellsprings of our sources and the Hebrew book, education had to be Jewry's first priority. Excellent youngsters in different European Zionist parties represented a bit of solace, but how long could they hope for an honorable existence, hanging as they currently were over an abyss?³⁶

As for “Re’itikhem,” Bialik did not understand all the fuss. The phrase “unclean of heart those who sanctify themselves” does not refer to the Revisionist leader, he informed Pogrovinski. Despite his opposition to Jabotinsky’s “waywardness,” he had always considered him “a good Zionist with the purest of intentions.” Reminding his former secretary of their last conversation in June, the poet explained that he had in mind all the factions and those individuals who brought about Weizmann’s resignation at the congress — Sokolow, Jewish National Fund President Menahem Ussishkin, some General Zionists, the Revisionists, Mizrachi, and so on. Each stanza alludes to one of the opposition. For that reason, he had denied in the letter to Katz that the poem targeted the Revisionists. “Was a poet obligated to be a politician?” he asked Pogrovinski. Rather, seeing the spectacle of those who danced at “the wedding,” he gave expression to “the feelings of his heart” — no more.³⁷

Yet a careful reading of the title phrase “anew” and the word “Basle,” appended to the poem, suggests that Bialik may have hinted as well to an earlier *cri de coeur*. On the eve of the first World Zionist Congress in 1897, which also took place in that Swiss canton, he had fulminated against Jewish apathy to the rising Zionist movement. “Akhen Hatsir HaAm” (“Surely the People Is Grass”), his first self-styled “Poem of Wrath,” finds Jewry wanting. Owing to thousands of years of wandering and persecution, he wrote then, the “dead” nation did not arise, free itself of decay, and cast off the degrading condition of Exile. It required a man, bold and true, to guide the Jewish people from darkness to light.³⁸ Years later, “Re’itikhem” called for another “noble prince pure of heart” who would revive their spirit and their strength. Having denied Weizmann as Zionism’s leader in 1931, the people had again been found wanting. Hence Bialik’s bitterness.

“Re’itikhem” also enabled the poet to mount a camouflaged assault against his literary foes. Bialik had communicated this same thought to his wife and to Cohen. The poem’s use of “epileptic” and “insects” recalls not only his private letters about the Congress but his earlier characterization of the *Ketuvim* crowd. The phrase “cutting pen and speech” could refer to literary and political adversaries; the closeness of “*m’asifkhem*” (rearguard) to “*m’asefkhem*” (literary journal) may not have been accidental. Shlonsky’s passionate responses thereafter indicate an awareness of this possibility. As for Greenberg’s dismissal of Bialik, perhaps “Re’itikhem,” in its allusion to the older bard’s first “Poem of Wrath,” sounded the bestirred lion’s roar that had been promised a few months earlier in “Gam B’Hit’aroto L’Eineikhem.” The latter does caution that his rhymes cover secrets, that his words are open to diverse interpretation.

At its core, the multilayered “Re’itikhem” takes on those youth in revolt against the political and literary authority of their predecessors. As Ziva Shamir has shown, the poem reflects Bialik’s close identification with Weizmann, also Russian born, also a moderate, his junior by one year, and like him under siege from different quarters. In the same year that “Akhen Hatsir HaAm” appeared, Bialik’s “Yaldut” (“Childhood”) satirized the young voices, political and literary, that opposed his primary guide, Ahad HaAm. In 1929, at the height of its quarrel with *Ketuvim*, *Moznayim* published part of Bialik’s Hebrew translation of *Julius Caesar*. That Elizabethan drama’s reflections on the fearful dangers of regicide and mob rule surface in “Re’itikhem.” To accomplish his end, Bialik mixed elements of elegy and satire, publicity and belles lettres, pity and revenge, politics and literature. As with some of the poet’s other verses, Fikhman later observed, bitter lament and deep pain join here with a prayer for recovery and a call for revival.³⁹ The singular amalgamation hurt many, and each of his opponents reacted accordingly.

III

For all the discord that it generated, “Re’itikhem” did not herald a spirited resumption of Bialik’s poetry. He continued to focus on *kinus* with his commentary on and punctuation of the Mishnaic order of *Zera’im*, to appear in 1932. While turning next to the order of *Taharot*, he joined Ravnitski in completing their edition of medieval poet Shlomo Ibn Gabirol’s work in seven volumes. (The latter did not satisfy Bialik fully: publisher Salman Schocken chose to have his private trove of secular Ibn Gabirol, who had decisively influenced Bialik, edited later under the care of Hayim Brody.) He collected in one volume his own stories for children, printed in various newspapers over the previous fifteen years. Stories of legends, written by Bialik since leaving Russia, also saw print as *VaYehi HaYom*. Both appeared in deluxe editions with illustrations by Nahum Gutman and sold well. Thanks to his earlier translation into Hebrew of Cervantes’s classic *Don Quixote*, he was also honored with induction into the Spanish Academy.⁴⁰

The one poem by Bialik to appear in 1932 reflects on his childhood, with its poignant recollections of poverty and abandonment. “Avi” (“My Father”), whose first lines refer to Bialik’s own shift between purity and defilement, recalls a scholarly, devout father untouched by the squalor and impurity of the tavern that he ran in Zhitomir. Daily, the pious but melancholy Jew had to

“mount the scaffold” and “be cast into the lion’s den.” Within a year, his heart gave out, leaving nothing to his three children and widow but a tombstone that read: “Here is buried a simple, upright man.” Bialik had not then reached his seventh birthday.⁴¹

As he approached his sixtieth in January 1933, the yishuv paid copious tribute. Under the guiding hand of friends Ravnitski and Shimon Druyanov, a one-volume edition of all his prose and poetry appeared, with his admirers covering the expenses. Gatherings and parties for “Bialik Month” were held under the auspices of the Hebrew Writers’ Association, national organizations issued stamps and commemorative items, and the city of Tel Aviv granted him honorary citizenship. Fikhman edited a volume devoted to his work, while *Moznayim* printed a special brochure of salutations and announced an annual prize in his name for Hebrew literature and thought. Special editions about his writing came out in *HaAretz*, *Davar*, and *Do’ar HaYom*. Joseph Klausner, first to tout him in 1902 as “the poet of the national renaissance” but subsequently taking sharp issue with his championing of Yiddish, joined a Hebrew University colleague in advancing Bialik’s name for the Nobel Prize for literature. Even Jabotinsky recanted, much to the celebrant’s appreciation, judging that his place stood at the same level of talent for which other nations honored their greatest lyrical poets.⁴²

The moment of happiness proved brief, as Bialik conflated his own declining health with Jewish affliction since January 1933 under the Nazi swastika. He began to cite for friends the book of Job while trying to conceal his great pain, and insisted that travelers to Germany and Austria tell him everything that they had seen there. The Talmud notes that the world fell prey to “the evil beast” and “the sword” because of perverse judgment, false testimony, and desecration of the Almighty’s name, he observed, but why is Jewry singled out? German antisemitic laws marked a new calamity for powerless Jews, yet the “civilized” world kept silent. “Why should I be free of hellish suffering?” he asked the poets Avigdor HaMeiri and David Shimoni. He returned from a walk on the Tel Aviv beach and played a record for them on his gramophone. Its title: “Dance of Death.”⁴³

At a meeting shortly before Arlosoroff made off for a trip to Germany that April, seeking to alleviate Jewry’s grim position, Bialik ventured his opinion that the German “episode” was liable to serve as only a beginning for all of the Jewish communities in Europe. Weizmann discussed his plans for the rescue of German Jewry, and then Arlosoroff rose to speak. Every Jew in Hitler’s Third Reich had to feel that this destruction was occurring not in

the time of Mendelssohn or that of Montefiore but in our own times. After the rise of Zionism and a laboring Eretz Israel, he emphasized, the answer must be different; we have not “dug wells here for naught.” As sons returning to the table of their mother, who has prepared for them a refuge for a day of destruction, the cast-off sons now had to return to the bosom of their land.⁴⁴

Bialik made the identical point in letters to friends in Germany and Austria, beseeching them several times to leave for “the Land of the Fathers” without delay. Not all listened to his advice to “drive a small stake” there as a refuge in time of distress. His heart foresaw a harsh vision; hopefully, it would be proven false. The catastrophe was great; the hand, weak. Fearing that the Hitlerite plague would spread, and certainly to neighboring countries, Bialik quoted the biblical prophet Amos’s repeated lament to the Lord: “How shall Jacob stand, for he is small?” The evil had come sooner than the poet expected. The “messianic throes” were approaching, he believed, and each had to save himself as best he could.⁴⁵

Standing before a conference of the Hebrew Writers’ Association in early June, Bialik gave vent to this anxiety in unqualified language. No one thought that the “storm of annihilation” would come to Germany after eight years, bringing “destruction upon Jewry” — and not only from an economic point of view. On one day, the verdict of this community was sealed. Its members stood at present before the loss of hope for upbuilding, asserted the poet. We can lean on no one but our own strengths. For that reason, we must bolster the one fortification in Eretz Israel, especially its creative power. In this fashion, he affirmed, would the yishuv be prepared for the new forces that would stream to its shores.⁴⁶

At the same time, political acrimony at home, which increasingly polarized Palestinian Jewry, elicited no comment from Bialik. When Ahimeir, now leading the small militant group Brit HaBiryoni (the Alliance of Ruffians), charged in the Revisionist weekly *Hazit HaAm* that Bialik had plagiarized part of a legend, the poet chose not to respond but to have a friend deny the accusation. In scolding his fellow General Zionists for losing interest in the yishuv’s cultural problems, Bialik did applaud the workers for creating vital institutions and literature. Yet he continued to maintain silence in the face of rising incitement from the Labor and Revisionist wings against one another.

Some within the former camp, including Yosef Aharonovitz, Moshe Beilinson, and Katznelson, expressed concern once Laborites violently assaulted young Betar marchers in Tel Aviv on the seventh day of Passover. Matters escalated after Jabotinsky (publicly called “Vladimir Hitler” by Mapai head

David Ben-Gurion) charged that Arlosoroff should not negotiate at all with the Nazi government. Revisionists labeled the Jewish Agency official a traitor for selling Jewish honor in return for a “transfer agreement” to get Jewish property out of Germany. On June 16, a long essay by Pogrovinski in *Hazit HaAm* warned that the Jewish nation would know, as in the past, how to react to this “villainy.” That same night, Arlosoroff was murdered by two assailants while walking with his wife under a moonless sky along the seashore of Tel Aviv.⁴⁷

Arlosoroff’s death shook Bialik. At first he thought that Arabs had committed the dark deed. Invited to address the mass funeral the following day, he prepared a draft that included the biblical injunction, “Remember what Amalek did to you.” The written outline may also have hinted at the Revisionists, given its reference, based on Genesis, to “Cain your brother.” As Ussishkin requested to speak on behalf of the national organizations, however, Bialik yielded to the senior man. He revised the eulogy, to be delivered at Bet HaAm in Tel Aviv after the seven traditional days of initial mourning had passed.⁴⁸

In the meantime, Katz sought to ascertain the identity of the killers. Katznelson told him that he doubted Jews were guilty: the Revisionists were Arlosoroff’s only strong enemies, but they would do nothing so terrible without Jabotinsky’s approval, and he thought that the Revisionist leader would never do such a thing. In addition, just before his death, Arlosoroff had told agency treasurer Eliezer Kaplan that Jews were not the murderers — a fact that Kaplan transmitted the next day to a closed meeting in Tel Aviv presided over by Mayor Meir Dizengoff. Kaplan confirmed this to a Katz contact but asked *HaAretz* to hold off publishing the information for the time being.

On June 26, the disturbed journalist called in that newspaper for a full investigation. The first and major thrust should be directed to Arabs, he wrote, recent killers of Jews in Yagur and Nahalal. The second, a “dubious conjecture,” is that, as with other peoples, two or three crazed Jewish zealots could be responsible for a political murder. Ravnitski and particularly Druyanov objected to the second possibility. Bialik, however, congratulated Katz for the article and told him that he would never again enter the Ahad HaAm house in Tel Aviv as long as Pogrovinski continued to serve as its librarian.⁴⁹

That same day, Bialik delivered his eulogy to Arlosoroff’s memory. “I was not close to the deceased,” he began, “yet at the last Zionist Congress I saw in him a true leader, possessing great charm. He delivered the brightest and most central speech there, his face shining in divine inspiration, and I kissed him when it was over. The wicked hand knew that it struck ‘the apple of the eye,’ the clearest single eye in our movement.” “For eight days,” he went on,

“we have been nailed to this tragedy as a person crucified to his cross — not to the tragedy itself, but to the mystery surrounding it. I did not imagine that Arlosoroff’s life would be cut so short.”

Passing to his main theme, Bialik warned that with the last strongholds in the Diaspora undergoing destruction, the yishuv had to exercise moral strength and the courage of self-restraint. With raised voice and body atremble, he appealed to the entire yishuv:

I call upon you, together with your leaders, to chase from your midst every Satan, to consume the evil and uproot it. Defiled words that we have not known have been thrown within us — “fist,” “ruffian” — these should not have any place within us. Our camp must be holy. “Fire and blood” and all other phrases that have nothing behind them but hollow rhetoric, no substance — there should be no trace of these. The one reality that we have is labor. . . . Imprudent speech and movement are forbidden, likely as they are to bring down calamity upon us! Now we only have the freedom of thoughts, thoughts of repentance.⁵⁰

The heartfelt charge indicates both Bialik’s identification with the victim and his suspicion that the Revisionists’ bellicose parlance had led to the murder. His tribute portrays Arlosoroff, whose Hebrew name “Haim” signifies life, to be clearheaded, broad-minded, and driven by a moral spirit and the wish to recognize truth. “Haim” commanded the yishuv to desist from revenge and to return to daily work, rather than adopt the tactics of the biblical Samson (here Bialik was hinting at the name of a novel by Jabotinsky), who killed in his death. Katz’s suspicions regarding the guilt of Revisionist Avraham Stavsky, arrested on June 19 and identified the next day by Arlosoroff’s widow, did not sway those who met at Bialik’s garden two weeks after the murder. Their host expressed a bit of misgiving, telling Katz: “Something here is not proper, but. . . .” Even Katznelson, although initially doubting Revisionist involvement, suggested otherwise in his own eulogy of Arlosoroff when cautioning Labor to remain pure and not to emulate the way of brutal power lauded by other parties. Indeed, before long he would publicly cite Katz’s *HaAretz* article as proof that Jews could have been the killers.⁵¹

While Left and Right prepared for a showdown at the forthcoming Zionist Congress in Prague that August, Bialik said nothing further about Arlosoroff’s death. As a sign of high regard for the fallen leader, he did

expend much effort in translating from German into Hebrew a short poem by Arlosoroff for a collection of the latter's work. Bialik also sought funds for *Moznayim*, tried unsuccessfully to arrange for the exit of a poet and his family from Russia, and replied to several correspondents about literary matters. Two public appearances were devoted to what he termed the "decree of extinction" against German Jewry, a community that was denied "all the elementary foundations of its existence."

Some writers, including Shlonsky, HaMeiri, and Glikson, kept up the drumbeat of attack against the Revisionists. Bialik thought, instead, to attend the Congress in order to criticize the movement's continued abandonment of Hebrew culture. In letters to Weizmann and Dr. David Rotblum of Vienna, he sharply complained that no national movement was so devoid of cultural content and a spiritual foundation as Zionism. Even Labor, the one party not estranged from these concerns, he thought unable to alter the regrettable state of affairs. Medical specialists at Karlsbad and Bad Gastein, which he visited for relief, advised against a trip to Prague; their admonition and his disgust at the WZO's stand on cultural matters convinced him to stay away.⁵²

Katz did not let up, convinced that new information that had come to his attention proved Stavsky's innocence. Unable legally to publish his findings in Palestine while the police investigation was under way, he tried without fortune to do so in the Warsaw daily *Heint*. During a visit to Bialik at Bad Gastein, where he also found *Heint's* publisher, the news arrived from Palestine that twenty more Revisionists had also been arrested. Among these were Ahimeir and Zvi Rosenblatt, soon identified by Sima Arlosoroff as the man who shot her late husband. The poet turned to the publisher and told him to advise the editorial board to say nothing in the absence of clarification, observing that it was forbidden to blame people when no clear proof existed against them. Katz proceeded to Prague, where Congress delegates heard that some of Ahimeir's seized papers indicated that he and other Revisionists had planned the killing of Arlosoroff. Jabotinsky and his forty-six-member faction ridiculed the report, and the Revisionist *Moment* newspaper in Warsaw published Katz's articles.⁵³

The national bard followed the Congress's deliberations closely. Even if Weizmann returned to power, Bialik wondered to Moshe Ungerfeld, how could he help the badly stricken nation? A promising thirst for redemption surfaced as a result, but havoc and chaos reigned. The one comfort, in his view, was Revisionism's defeat in Prague. Labor broke the tradition that all parties be represented on the presidium, and by a scant majority of two, the Revisionists were thus humiliated. No free discussion of the German Jewish

crisis took place; secrecy surrounded the investigation of the Arlosoroff murder. To Bialik, however, the downfall of the Revisionist Party chief, whom he “loved with a full heart,” offered the reform of Zionism. If only Jabotinsky, “sunk into the mud by Satan,” would repent. Hopefully, God “will have mercy on this exile and bring him from darkness to light.”⁵⁴ In the end, Sokolow was reelected president, and Labor’s representation on the Jewish Agency Executive increased. Most significantly, Ben-Gurion joined the executive, while Moshe Shertok (later Sharett) succeeded to Arlosoroff’s post.

Viewing the “fire eating fire” that marked the eighteenth World Zionist Congress, Bialik felt certain that his fraying nerves could not have stood the “boiling” proceedings. With the Left charging the Revisionists with murder and the Right raising the accusation of a blood libel by Jews against Jews, fist fights broke out in Eretz Israel and in Poland, the Revisionists’ political bastion. Bialik kept his distance from the battle, moving to a pension in Ramat Gan while plans went ahead for building a luxurious home nearby. There, without the benefit of even a dictionary, he managed in the next six months to follow up his “Avi” and “Shiva” (the last written in Bad Gastein) with “Almenut” and “Preida,” the four poems making up a cycle entitled “Yatmut” (“Orphanhood”). The first two, dealing with his father’s death and the seven-day period of immediate mourning, are followed by descriptions of the subsequent suffering of his mother and her anguished need to give up the orphans to the care of relatives.⁵⁵

Katz’s crusade for truth got a boost at the summer’s end. A publisher translated his two articles from Polish into Hebrew and released them as a pamphlet to wide circulation in Palestine; no legal charges ensued. *Lo Ukhla L’HaHashot* (*I Cannot Be Silent*) impressed many that Stavsky, Ahimeir, and Rosenblatt, the three ultimately charged with Arlosoroff’s death, were innocent of the crime. Further, Bialik expressed to Katz his “100 percent certainty” that Jews did not kill the Labor leader. After a few days had passed, the poet confided to Katz that while in Bad Gastein, he had also visited the spa in Baden. There he met Miss Anna Landau, the English-born woman who served as the principal of the Evelina de Rothschild school for girls in Jerusalem. One of her many British acquaintances was Captain Alfred William-Riggs, adviser to the regional superintendent and attached to the Criminal Investigation Department for the mandatory power. While unable to say anything negative regarding his superiors, Riggs privately told Landau that the entire police investigation was “a bluff”: the killing was a haphazard incident, not a political assassination. This information, shared in confidence,

impressed Bialik greatly. He, in turn, shared it with Pogrovinski.⁵⁶

While keeping this revelation from the public, Bialik's agitation about European Jewry and its need to reach Palestine did not cease. All of its communities there, he opined in early 1934, "stood at the threshold of destruction"; the small yishuv, "the saving remnant," stood at the brink of renaissance and rejuvenation. The conclusion was self-explanatory; whoever does not see this will "rot in his blindness." Only by their own efforts would Jews receive Eretz Israel; by doubling and trebling their numbers, they would find a solution to the Arab problem. He urged friends like Rotblum to emigrate without further delay, although Bialik's essay about the burning of books in Germany, with its elevated rhetoric and message of comfort, suggests that even he failed to grasp fully the potential dimensions of the Nazi horror.⁵⁷

A seeming breakthrough in the Arlosoroff investigation occurred in January 1934, when Abdul Medjid El-Kurdi, in prison for another murder charge, twice confessed that he and another Arab were involved in killing the Jewish leader. The day after the testimony of his first confession appeared in *HaAretz*, Katz was sitting in the editorial offices with Dr. Shmuel Kaufman, who had all along believed in the guilt of Stavsky and of Rosenblatt. Bialik walked in and said to Kaufman: "Now you have to ask for pardon from those of whom you had thought ill. It is now clear as the sun that they are innocent." As Katz then escorted Bialik to a bus for Ramat Gan, the poet declared: "I was certain even before this that the defendants were innocent, but now I feel clearly with a writer's intuition that what Abdul Medjid told is correct." Katz was convinced that within a day or two the charges would be dropped against the two Revisionists. He erred.⁵⁸

Abdul Medjid twice retracted his confession after members of the Arab Executive visited his cell, and he claimed that Stavsky and Rosenblatt had offered him a substantial bribe to confess to the murder. The two men vehemently denied the story. Their defense attorney accused the police of manipulating Sima Arlosoroff's testimony and proposed that the killing was connected with an intended sexual attack on Mrs. Arlosoroff by the two Arabs, much as Arabs had raped a Jewish woman nearby and then killed her and her male companion in 1931. The Labor movement, with Ben-Gurion at its helm, relied on the widow's testimony and insisted that Revisionist ranks included youngsters who favored criminal fascist action. Jabotinsky retorted in the *Rasswyet* Paris newspaper at the end of February that while the Jewish "jackals" in Eretz Israel dreamed that Jews would be convicted, the "clams" of

the yishuv permitted the intrigue, more brazen than the Dreyfus and Beilis cases, to go unchallenged.⁵⁹

With the yishuv on the verge of fratricidal war, several notables, including Bialik, met privately in Tel Aviv on the evening of March 18, 1934, to address the escalating Left–Right struggle. Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi Avraham Yitshak Kook, in tandem with the city’s chief rabbis, called for a truce. Mayor Dizengoff pilloried the Histadrut’s effort to monopolize jobs against the Revisionists, who also suffered much discrimination in the Jewish Agency’s allotment of entry certificates for Palestine, and suggested that the British government be asked to become involved. Druyanov criticized the press polemics of both sides and, with Mizrahi leader Daniel Sirkis, announced his conviction that the three Revisionists on trial were innocent. It was decided that a proclamation be issued against the continued political violence, as well as to consider creating a committee to raise funds for the Stavsky–Ahimeir–Rosenblatt defense team in keeping with the biblical injunction to save Jews.⁶⁰

Bialik’s response, which hitherto has eluded the searchlight of history, merits full citation:

I doubt if anyone will have influence. Jewry is sick at present. The bullets of the blood of the Reds fight with the Whites. I find an analogy in the war between the Mitnagdim and the Hasidim and in the war between Hasidim themselves, and yet they reconciled. The current great war must be understood from the psychological point of view as a baseless war and unfounded hatred. We must therefore discover the shared foundations for all of us, and this foundation must be a holy obligation for us all. [The speaker then attacked the education of the Left and brought facts illustrating how they seek to transmit hatred and poison against their opponents to the hearts of small children.]

I vehemently oppose Dizengoff’s suggestion to ask the mandatory government to intervene in this matter and remind those present of the argument between Hyrcanus and Aristobulus, and when they turned to Rome in order to mediate between them they caused the destruction. In this regard, too, the destruction of the nation may occur if we turn to the government, and the government will certainly be pleased with this. From the psychological perspective, all the combatants are

now already found in the hands of Satan, and it is impossible for them to free themselves of it in the sense of “tearing yourself to shreds in your anger,” in the words of the *Zohar*. We therefore have to come to their help. I suggest that we call a second meeting and invite to it all the known communal leaders and also the Keren Kayemet L'Yisrael and the Keren HaYesod. We will ask help from the newspapers and prepare a plan of action. As to the Stavsky case, I think that just as it cannot be said with certainty that Stavsky and his friends are guilty, so it cannot be said that the trial is the inspiration of the workers, and zealotry in this instance is a sin against the community. I agree that we have to aid the defense, to raise it to its proper place and to honor it.⁶¹

At the same time, Bialik did not accept the challenge of Mizrahi head Meir Berlin (later Bar-Ilan) that he would exercise much influence if he joined Dizengoff in repeating their critical remarks publicly and persistently. Nor did he sign a declaration, issued in April by Kook and others, that funds should be collected for the defense of “our imprisoned three brothers” on trial in Jerusalem.

Although he faulted both sides during the March conference and doubted Stavsky's guilt, Jabotinsky *et al.* continued to be the prime target of Bialik's rebuke. Viewing the great political animosity pervading Palestinian Jewry, he wrote to Rotblum, it could be said that “the seed of the Revisionist Satan has produced gall and wormwood.” Despite this, however, he was positive that the healthy body of the yishuv would overcome this “sickness.” The flow of life in the country still stood firm and was “like an inexhaustible spring.” Encouragement could be found from the many Jews who settled in the country over the past year. There were even grounds to believe, he closed, that an additional 40 to 50 thousand Jews would be permitted to enter Eretz Israel the next year.⁶²

Hewing to his publicly independent stand, Bialik similarly held back from protesting along with writers and other intellectuals against orchard owners and farmers in the Sharon Valley who hired Arab labor. After one such demonstration in May, led by the poet Shaul Tschernihovsky, he informed a correspondent that instead of resorting to various forms of force, negotiation alone would bring a remedy. Free will and shared concessions were necessary. A trustworthy institution, recognized by both sides, should serve as

the final arbiter in every dispute. After all, he observed, the Torah was given not to angels but to human beings: whenever their good and evil inclinations conflicted, a court had to mediate and decide.⁶³

That same month, the attendees at the March 18 meeting in Tel Aviv finally issued their proclamation. Coming a few days after Ahimeir was acquitted of “conspiracy to murder,” the manifesto called on all the factions in Eretz Israel and particularly their political leadership to halt all “savage and violent actions.” The lifting of a hand against another fellow, except if a robber, was declared “an abomination.” Kook led the signatories, followed by Shlomo Aharonson and Ben-Zion Uziel (the chief Ashkenazi and Sepharadi rabbis of Tel Aviv); Mizrachi representatives Berlin, Sirkis, and Rabbi Moshe Ostrovsky; Dizengoff; Druyanov; educator David Yellin; writer and agricultural pioneer Moshe Smilansky; and Petah Tikva Mayor Shlomo Stampfer. Bialik’s name was conspicuously absent.⁶⁴

On June 8, the court acquitted Rosenblatt but sentenced Stavsky by a vote of three to one (the Jewish judge in the minority) to death by hanging. Ten days later, a proclamation urged every Jew and honest human being to protest against the spilling of “innocent and righteous blood” in Jerusalem should the defense’s appeal fail and the verdict be carried out. Aside from Kook, Sepharadi Chief Rabbi Ya’akov Meir, and Uziel, the names of thirteen other illustrious Torah sages appeared. On June 19, Ahimeir was sentenced to twenty-one months’ imprisonment with hard labor, and his three Brit HaBiryonim codefendants given three, nine, and fifteen months, for belonging to a terrorist organization.

That same day, 110 leading citizens issued a manifesto averring that “a terrible error” of justice had occurred against Stavsky and expressing their belief that the truth would eventually emerge victorious. Aside from Dizengoff, the presidents of the four largest agricultural colonies, industrialists and merchants, and leaders of the General Zionist Party and Mizrachi, the list of poets and writers included Tschernihovsky, Cohen, Ravnitski, Klausner, Katz, Druyanov, Yehuda Karni, Ya’akov Rabinovitz, and Nahum Slouschz. Once again, Bialik’s name did not appear. He had by then arrived in Vienna for an operation, although his past silence suggests the unlikelihood that his signature would have been forthcoming.⁶⁵

On the Sabbath prior to his leaving Palestine, Bialik appeared in Ohel Shem (Tel Aviv’s Community Hall) and spoke about the “sick yishuv.” Noting that he was about to depart for medical treatment abroad, he contended that the city and the yishuv in general were ill at this hour. Rather than care for the

refugees who arrive from Germany, Palestine's Jews charge them high rents and steal their last pennies. Speculation in land eats us up as a moth. People desert the countryside for the city, and the noble concept of Jewish work may give way to foreign laborers. Most important, he decried the internal dissolution, multiple parties, hatred of brothers, and acts of havoc and ruin as they were revealed in "the known trial." "I pray," the speaker ended, "that I will be privileged to see signs of recovery upon my return to Eretz Israel."⁶⁶

The fervent desire remained unfulfilled, for Bialik died on July 4 while recovering from an operation in Vienna. "Israel has become orphaned," the title chosen by Katznelson and Beilinson, ran the black-bordered front page of *Davar* the next morning. From Vienna, where 3,000 paid tribute at the Jewish cemetery, the coffin made its way by train on July 9 to Trieste and then by boat to Eretz Israel. The day of final internment, one week later, traffic stopped in Tel Aviv at 2 p.m., movie theaters shut down, and a death notice was posted in schools; all national and communal institutions closed their doors. Thousands attended in silence the funeral at Ohel Shem, following which Bialik was laid to permanent rest in the Tel Aviv cemetery at the side of his mentor, Ahad HaAm.⁶⁷

IV

A stunned Zionist establishment gave strong expression to its sudden tragedy. Weizmann was "terribly shocked" at the loss of "the great moral and spiritual force Bialik wielded." A very upset Arthur Ruppin, father of Jewish colonization in Eretz Israel, inscribed in his diary that the poet was "a sort of conscience of the yishuv." With *Davar* appearing with black borders for three days, Katznelson's lead essay lamented that "an insane blow has stolen Bialik from us . . . woe to us that we have been ravaged." Ben-Gurion characterized the poet as "the spiritual leader of his people, the master craftsman of our language. No Jew of our time has had such a powerful impact on the life of his people. . . . In our eyes he was the bearer of the nation's legacy, of its ideals and aspirations."⁶⁸

Former opponents, too, acknowledged Bialik's greatness. Shlonsky praised the healthy, positive nature of the deceased, equally reflected in his poetry, as opposed to the hopelessness in Brenner's novels and the alienation that permeates the stories of Uri Nissan Gnessin. Jabotinsky paid lengthy tribute to "the one poet in all of modern literature whose poetry directly molded the soul of a generation." It made no difference now for whom "Re'itikhem" was intended:

factions and parties were transitory, but the social vision in the bard's work would one day return in different forms. Bialik's eternal legacy, the Revisionist leader concluded, was his yearning for courage and romance, inspiring youth with the need for bold and dangerous action against external oppression and internal cowardice. Klausner would also focus on Bialik's revolutionary "Poems of Wrath," his hatred of the Diaspora, and his call for a dramatic change in Jewish values, claiming that only thus would there arise among us "a first generation of redemption and the end to the last generation of slavery."⁶⁹

Ahimeir, who did not resume Brit HaBiryonim activity after his release from prison in August 1935, never forgave Bialik for his silence during "the trial." In his later account of the legal proceedings, the Revisionist asserted that Bialik's hatred of Jabotinsky's party militated against publicly acknowledging Stavsky's innocence. Reliable sources, he added, indicated subsequently that Katznelson had persuaded the poet not to support the defense and divulge in public what he had heard and repeated privately regarding the true facts of the case. In Ahimeir's memoir, the more moderate Katznelson gave way, even after Abdul Medjid's original testimony, to Ben-Gurion, Dov Hos, Eliyahu Golomb, and other militants within Mapai's executive who chose to pursue the "blood libel" in obstinate fashion.⁷⁰

Ahad HaAm's influence, according to Ahimeir, concomitantly shaped Bialik's literary and political stance. Like the man he always considered his teacher, the poet concentrated on the Diaspora and its weakness but did not openly embrace the aggressive tone of such writers as Tschernihovsky. His portraits of nature are calm; his Eretz Israel, pastoral. Nowhere can be found descriptions of Yodfat, Matsada, and Betar, all symbols of Jewish armed resistance to Roman rule. Bialik's sharp opposition to Herzl's approach, reflected first in "Birkat Am" (later adopted by the Histadrut as its hymn), later shifted to Jabotinsky in "Re'itikhem." His poems "HaBreikha" and "M'tei Midbar," Ahimeir maintained, do succeed when limning a static, stable world, not one of *sturm und drang* as described by Ahad HaAm's young opponent, Mikha Berdichevski. Following Ahad HaAm, Bialik embraced spiritual Zionism, with words like "light," "sun," and "spirit" surfacing often in his verse. And like the primary objection of Ahad HaAm to Herzl's "forcing the issue," Bialik faulted the political activism advocated by Herzl and his ideological successor, Jabotinsky. Hence the poet's adamant and consistent denunciation against the Revisionist secessionists.⁷¹

Confirmation for Ahimeir's analysis of Bialik's silence during "the trial" comes from a confidence shared by Kook with his young pupil Moshe Zvi

Nerya. On their way to the Jewish Agency's memorial for Bialik, Kook revealed that the late poet had agreed that Stavsky was innocent. Yet he refused to sign the group proclamation in May 1934, telling the Ashkenazi chief rabbi, a *kohen* whom he admired and had once called "the high priest," that he did not wish to lose the sympathy that he had from the Labor community in Eretz Israel. Just before leaving for Vienna, Bialik informed Klausner that the Histadrut was committing "great, irreparable errors" but, contrary to public opinion, he had no influence on the political Left and its leaders. They had goals and ways of their own and would not abandon these "even if God Himself appeared to them." This hint about the trial echoes the thrust of Bialik's revealing private statement to the Jewish dignitaries present at the Tel Aviv meeting the previous March.⁷²

By life's end, the former optimist had reason for anxiety and despair. Painful physical infirmity coincided with rising antisemitism in Nazi Germany and elsewhere. Culturally, his people's future outside of Palestine appeared more than questionable. The Zionists had dethroned Weizmann, with whom he most identified, and continued to reject Bialik's pleas for subvention of Hebrew and literature. Arlosoroff, his brightest hope for the movement's future, had abruptly fallen to a killer's bullet. A new generation had equally taken issue with the national bard's own, formerly sacrosanct, literary status. And, for all the veneration and popularity accorded him, the realization that he exercised scant influence on the yishuv left Bialik a bitter man.

At a farewell party in Berlin in early 1924, the preeminent Jewish historian Simon Dubnow expressed the hope that Bialik would resume his career as poet, writing lines that flowed from the "pure well of the Song of Songs and raise anew the banner on which is inscribed 'that Torah go forth from Zion.'" In actuality, the extremely rare verses that followed either lashed out against Revisionists and other adversaries or recalled the wretchedness of his childhood. When an amazed eight-year-old once asked Bialik in a Tel Aviv park why he had not written a poem about Eretz Israel, he replied: "Have you ever written a love letter to your mother?"⁷³ The reply conceals much, not least the angst that came with mounting frustration and disappointment, some of which found their way into his letters and the subsequent concentration on *kinus*.

An advocate of reconciliation, Bialik enjoyed limited happiness in the internecine political-cultural atmosphere that engulfed the yishuv during the decade that he lived in Palestine. His aversion to coercive tactics and his independent critique of all factions, a personal antipathy to the Revisionists notwithstanding, won him few allies. Fortunately, he did not witness the

unsurprising reaction to Stavsky's acquittal by the Court of Appeal on July 20, 1934, for lack of corroborating evidence. Labor continued to believe Stavsky and Rosenblatt to be Arlosoroff's murderers, Revisionists taking this reaction as further proof of a blood libel. In March 1935 the Histadrut rejected a promising *modus vivendi* between Jabotinsky and Ben-Gurion; the Revisionists officially seceded from the World Zionist Organization one month later.⁷⁴ These tensions would plague the yishuv for years to come.

"Hey, Bialik, Where Are You?" Greenberg's provocative query of 1927, elicited an understandable reaction under the circumstances. Confronted by heightened divisiveness at home, dubbed by him satanic, Bialik persisted in poetic silence. For this reason, too, he made the decision against publicizing his knowledge of Stavsky's innocence or signing proclamations to that effect. Such steps, he concluded, would not sway the Left but only add additional fuel to the flames of internal discord and schism just when a somber future loomed before the Jewish people abroad. Klausner may have best grasped the poet's predicament, observing one year after his death that "Bialik did not complete what he had started." Conditions had changed in Eretz Israel, with Jewry becoming estranged from the Judaism upon which he had been nurtured. Bialik's addresses spoke in part to this reality, mirroring his great sadness at the emerging new order.⁷⁵ Others would now have to grapple with the great uncertainties that lay ahead.

Notes

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- 1 *Igrot Hayim Nahman Bialik*, Vol. 5, P. Lahover, ed. (Tel Aviv, 1939), pp. 182–183. The mouse reference is based on the Babylonian Talmud, *Hulin* 126b. This and all other translations from the Hebrew are mine.
- 2 Chap. 1. For the consequences of Bialik's sojourn in the United States, see Michael Brown, *The Israeli–American Connection, Its Roots in the Yishuv, 1914–1945* (Detroit, 1996), pp. 91–98.
- 3 Geoffrey Wigoder, *Dictionary of Jewish Biography* (Jerusalem, 1991), p. 70; Shlomo Shva, *Hozeh B'rab: Sipur Hayav Shel Hayim Nahman Bialik* (Tel Aviv, 1990), p. 315.
- 4 Zohar Shavit, *HaHayim HaSifrutiyim B'Eretz Yisrael, 1910–1933* (Tel Aviv, 1983), pp. 148–149; Shva, *Hozeh B'rab*, pp. 268–275; Hillel Barzel, *Shirat Eretz–Yisrael: Greenberg, Lamdan, Shoham* (B'nai Brak, Israel, 2004), p. 490. For the conflict over Bialik's championing of Yiddish, see Sara Feinstein, *Sunshine, Blossoms and Blood, H. N. Bialik in His Time: A Literary Biography* (Lanham, Md., 2005), pp. 242–252.
- 5 Chap. 1; Ze'ev Jabotinsky, *Igarot, 1930–1931* (Jerusalem, 2004), p. 236; Shva, *Hozeh B'rab*, pp. 251–252. For Jabotinsky's strong regard for Bialik, see the introduction to his translated selection (1911) of the poet's work, reprinted in Ze'ev Jabotinsky, *Al Sifrut V'Omanut* (Jerusalem, 1948), pp. 99–120.
- 6 “Bialik Al HaHanhaga V'Al HaTsiyonut B'Khlah,” *HaOlam*, July 21, 1931, pp. 550–551; *HaAretz*, Nov. 9, 1926.
- 7 Jabotinsky, *Al Sifrut V'Omanut*, pp. 263–279; Joseph B. Schechtman, *Fighter and Prophet, the Vladimir Jabotinsky Story: The Last Years* (New York, 1961), pp. 103–104.
- 8 Hayim Nahman Bialik, *D'varim ShehBa'al Peh*, Vol. 1 (Tel Aviv, 1935), pp. 30–31; *Igrot B. Katznelson, 1919–1922*, Y. Erez and A. M. Kolar, eds. (Tel Aviv, 1970), pp. 299–300; *HaOlam*, Mar. 7, 1924; Anita Shapira, *Berl, Biografia*, Vol. 1 (Tel Aviv, 1981), p. 249; Shva, *Hozeh B'rab*, pp. 277–278.
- 9 Bialik, *D'varim ShehBa'al Peh*, pp. 31–32, 56–58.
- 10 *Davar*, Dec. 24, 1926; Avraham Cordova, “Intellectualim LeLo Peshara BaHayim HaPolitiyim: HaMikreh Shel 'Brit HaBiryonim,” in *HaSifrut HaIvrit U'Tenuat HaAvoda*, P. Genosar, ed. (Beersheba, 1989), pp. 230–231; Nurit Gretz, *Sifrut V'Idiologia B'Eretz Yisrael B'Shnat HaShloshim* (Tel Aviv, 1988), pp. 25–26; *Davar*, Jan. 5, 1928.
- 11 H. N. Bialik, “HaKedusha ShehBaHayim,” *Do'ar HaYom*, Feb. 27, 1928, p. 3.
- 12 Uri Zvi Greenberg, “Kelapei Tish'im V'Tish'a,” *Davar*, Nov. 18, 1927, Literary Supplement, pp. 1–2; A. Z. Rabinowitz (AZAR), “Hirhurim,” *Davar*, Nov. 21, 1927, p. 3. Greenberg's use of the noun *bayit* for “First Temple” suggests a pun, offering a second meaning: the first stanza of poetry.
- 13 Uri Zvi Greenberg, “Bialik,” in Uri Zvi Greenberg, *Kol Ketavav*, Vol. 2 (Jerusalem,

- 1991), pp. 99–100. Bialik's "Poems of Wrath" include "Akhen Hatsir HaAm," "Al HaShehita," and "B'ir HaHareiga," the first (1897) angrily reproaching Jewish apathy to the rising Zionist movement, and the other two responding to the 1903 pogrom in Kishinev.
- 14 Uri Zvi Greenberg, *Hazon Ehad HaLigyonot* (Tel Aviv, 1928); A. Shlonsky, "Min HaTsad – Egrofism," *HaAretz*, Oct. 17, 1928, p. 1; *Igrot Hayim Nahman Bialik*, 4, P. Lahover, ed. (Tel Aviv, 1938), pp. 262, 271–272. For Greenberg's pioneering significance in the emergence of Eretz Israel's "political poetry," see Hanan Hever, *Paitanim U'Biryonom: Ts'mihat HaShir HaPoliti HaIvri B'Eretz Yisrael* (Jerusalem, 1994), pp. 139–155.
 - 15 *Igrot Hayim Nahman Bialik*, 4, pp. 285–286; Yohanan Pogrovinski, "Ze'ev Jabotinsky V'H. N. Bialik," *HaBoker*, July 25, 1941, pp. 4–5. The Western ("Wailing") Wall represents the last remnant of the wall surrounding the Holy Temple. Tish'a B'Av marks the destruction of the First and Second Holy Temples. The Mishna is the first codification of traditional Jewish Oral Law, composed of six orders and edited at the end of the second century C.E. by Rabbi Judah HaNasi.
 - 16 *Kol Shirei H. N. Bialik* (Tel Aviv, 1970 ed.), pp. 234–237.
 - 17 Shva, *Hozeh B'rah*, p. 316; Yohanan Pogrovinski, "Hamesh Shanim Im Bialik," *HaDo'ar*, Mar. 15, 1945, p. 397.
 - 18 Pogrovinski, "Hamesh Shanim Im Bialik," as cited in n. 17. According to the Scroll of Esther, Haman, son of Hamedata the Agagite, unsuccessfully sought to kill all the Jews in the Persian kingdom of Ahasuerus. Haman, traditionally seen as a member of the biblical tribe of Amalek, subsequently became the symbol of Jewry's most diabolic enemy.
 - 19 Norman Rose, *Chaim Weizmann, a Biography* (New York, 1989), pp. 289–293; Yitshak Lofban, *Anshei Segula*, 1 (Tel Aviv, 1949), pp. 75–108. For a pro-Revisionist presentation, see Schechtman, *Fighter and Prophet*, pp. 147–154.
 - 20 *HaOlam*, July 21, 1931; H. N. Bialik, *Igrot El Ra'ayato Manya*, Y. L. Barukh, trans. (Jerusalem, 1955), pp. 238–240; *Igrot Hayim Nahman Bialik*, 5, pp. 164–169.
 - 21 M. Agaf, "Bialik BaKongressim HaTsiyonim" (n.d.), file S71/3485, Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem; *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann*, 15 (Jerusalem, 1978), p. 207n.
 - 22 H. N. Bialik, letter to Chaim Weizmann, Aug. 20, 1931. This was first printed in Ziva Shamir, "L'Pitaron Hidat HaShir 'Re'itikhem Shuv B'Kotser Yedkhem," in *HaSifrut HaIvrit U'Tenuat HaAvoda*, P. Genosar, ed. (Beersheba, 1989), pp. 217–220.
 - 23 Bialik, *Igrot El Ra'ayato Manya*, p. 244.
 - 24 *Kol Shirei H. N. Bialik*, pp. 238–239.
 - 25 Ben-Zion Katz, *Al Itonim V'Anashim* (Tel Aviv, 1983), p. 149; Shva, *Hozeh B'rah*, p. 321; Bialik, *Igrot El Ra'ayato Manya*, pp. 252–253.
 - 26 Shva, *Hozeh B'rah*, pp. 323–324; Eshel (Avraham Shlonsky), review, *Ketuvim*, Nov. 4, 1931, p. 2.
 - 27 *HaAretz*, Nov. 8 and 30, 1931; Yitshak Lofban, "Im Shiro Shel Bialik," *HaPoel HaTsa'ir*, Nov. 13, 1931; Yitshak Lofban, "Heh'ara," *HaPoel HaTsa'ir*, Nov. 27, 1931, pp. 14–15.

- 28 Avraham Shlonsky, "Hevlei Shir," *Ketuvim*, Nov. 26, 1931, p. 1.
- 29 Shlomo Zemah, "Ketanot," *Moznayim*, Dec. 31, 1931, pp. 13–14. The Talmud provides additional commentaries on the Mishna, the Palestinian version compiled by the end of the fourth century C.E. and the Babylonian a century later.
- 30 Moshe Glikson, "Al Bialik V'Al Pulmus HaAnti Bialiki," *HaAretz*, Jan. 22, 1932, p. 2.
- 31 Avraham Shlonsky, "Min HaKatseh El HaKatseh," *Ketuvim*, Jan. 30, 1932, pp. 2–3. Emek Yizrael symbolized the emerging agricultural yishuv.
- 32 Moshe Glikson, "Al Kinus V'Al Yetsira," *HaAretz*, Feb. 7, 1932, p. 2. The young poet Natan Alterman later offered his own independent analysis. See "BaMa'agal," *Ketuvim*, Mar. 30, 1932, p. 2.
- 33 Ze'ev Jabotinsky, "A Gevezener Dikhter," *Morning Journal*, Dec. 27, 1931, later reprinted as "Bialik – Ish HaPulmus" in *Hazit HaAm*, Jan. 29, 1932, p. 2, and under the title "HaMeshorer L'ShehAvar" ("The Former Poet"), in Jabotinsky, *Al Sifrut V'Omanut*, pp. 355–360. The original draft is in file 124/7/1/A, Jabotinsky Archives, Metsudat Ze'ev, Tel Aviv. The Pale of Settlement, composed of some 386,000 square miles that ran from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea within the borders of czarist Russia, was designated as the territory in which Jewish residence and occupation were restricted from the end of the eighteenth century until the Bolshevik Revolution.
- 34 "BaItanim," *HaAretz*, Jan. 20, 1932, pp. 2–4; Menahem Ribalow, "Bialik U'Mefarashav," *HaDo'ar*, Jan. 8, 1932, p. 118; Pinhas Lahover, "Tehum V'Hutz l'Tehum," *Moznayim*, Jan. 28, 1932, p. 1. Max Nordau (1849–1923) was Herzl's closest associate and a firm advocate of political Zionism.
- 35 Ya'akov Nakht, "Ayin Yafa," *Davar*, July 22, 1935. "From the pit to the trap" is based on *Isaiah* 24:18.
- 36 *HaAretz*, Oct. 15, 1931; *HaAretz*, Jan. 12, 1932; Azriel Carlebach, "Bialik, Orekh Galuti Bein Yahudim," *HaAretz*, Feb. 3, 1932, p. 3; *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann*, 15, p. 262n; H. N. Bialik, "HaYahadut BaGola," *HaAretz*, Feb. 22, 1932, pp. 2–3; Feb. 23, 1932, pp. 2–3; Feb. 13, 1932, pp. 2–3.
- 37 Pogrovinski, "Hamesh Shanim Im Bialik," p. 397. The memoirist first published some parts of this conversation as "Ze'ev Jabotinsky V'Hayim Nahman Bialik," *HaBoker*, July 25, 1941, pp. 4–5.
- 38 H. N. Bialik, *Kol Shirei*, pp. 67–68. "Surely the people is grass" is based on *Isaiah* 40:7.
- 39 Ziva Shamir, "Yovel 'Shir HaKongress' Shel Bialik," *Davar*, July 24, 1981, p. 18; Shamir, "L'Pitaron Hidat HaShir 'Re'itikhem Shuv B'Kotser Yedkhem," pp. 204–206.
- 40 Shva, *Hozeh B'rah*, pp. 352–356; Sarah Katz, *Bialik BeHevlei Ibn Gabirol* (Jerusalem, 1999), pp. 138–139, 142–151.
- 41 *Moznayim*, Nov. 17, 1932.
- 42 Shva, *Hozeh B'rah*, pp. 274, 356, 365; Yosef Klausner, "Sifrutenu," *HaShiloah*, 10 (1902–1903), pp. 434–452; *Davar*, July 22, 1935; Jabotinsky, *Al Sifrut V'Omanut*, pp. 355–360; Pogrovinski, "Ze'ev Jabotinsky V'H. N. Bialik."
- 43 Avigdor HaMeiri, *Bialik Al-Atar* (Tel Aviv, 1962), pp. 146–154.
- 44 Zalman Shazar, *Or Ishim*, 2 (Jerusalem, 1964), p. 145. Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786) was the preeminent advocate of Jews embracing the Enlightenment in

- Western Europe. Sir Moses Montefiore (1784–1885), an Orthodox Jew in England, often interceded with different governments on behalf of his beleaguered people.
- 45 *Igrot Hayim Nahman Bialik*, 5, pp. 222–224; *Amos* 7:2, 5.
 - 46 *Davar*, June 2, 1933.
 - 47 Chap. 8; Shva, *Hozeh B'rah*, p. 356; Hayim Nahman Bialik, *Devarim ShehBa'al Peh*, pp. 214–222; *Davar*, May 5, 1933; Anita Shapira, “HaVikuah B'Tokh Mapai Al HaShimush B'Alimut, 1932–1935,” *HaTsiyonut*, 5 (1978), pp. 154–155; *Davar*, Feb. 18, 1933; Yohanan Progrovinski, “Brit Stalin – Ben-Gurion – Hitler,” *Hazit HaAm*, June 16, 1933, p. 2; chap. 8. For the Brit HaBiryoni, its name taken from the Jewish zealots in action against the Romans and their Jewish collaborators during the Roman occupation of Eretz Israel, see Abba Ahimeir, *Brit HaBiryoni* (Tel Aviv, 1972) and chap. 8. For Beilinson, see Anita Shapira, “Romantikan Shel Yom Katnut,” *Davar*, Oct. 3, 1986, p. 19.
 - 48 Ziva Shamir, “Egrof, Biryon, Al Yeheh Lahem Makom B'Tokhenu: Hayim Nahman Bialik V'Retsah Arlosoroff,” *Yediot Aharonot*, June 14, 1985, Literature and Arts Section, p. 2. For Amalek, the archetypal Gentile enemy nation that attempted to annihilate the Jewish people, see *Exodus* 17: 8–16 and *Deuteronomy* 25:17–19. For Cain's killing of his brother Abel, see *Genesis* 4: 1–15.
 - 49 Katz, *Al Itonim V'Anashim*, pp. 157–158; Ben-Zion Katz, *Lo Ukhal LeHaHashot (Al D'var Retsah Arlosoroff)* (Tel Aviv, 1933), pp. 3–4; Ben-Zion Katz, “Al Tikre'u Ben HaShitin,” *HaAretz*, June 26, 1933, p. 2.
 - 50 *Davar*, June 26, 1933. Arie (Louva) Eliav, befriended when twelve years old by Bialik, recalls that the agitated poet talked to him at that time of nothing but the murder and the political strife within the yishuv. Arie Eliav, telephone conversation with the author, Aug. 29, 2005. Eliav would later command the American vessel *Ulua* (renamed *Haim Arlosoroff*), which brought 1,384 Holocaust survivors to Eretz Israel on February 28, 1947, in the face of stringent British immigration quotas. The mandatory authorities deported these Jews to Cyprus.
 - 51 *Haim Arlosoroff, L'Yom HaShana* (Tel Aviv, 1934), pp. 22–23; Katz, *Al Itonim V'Anashim*, pp. 157–158; *Davar*, June 26, 1933. For the police investigation and later trial of Arlosoroff's alleged killers, see Chap. 8.
 - 52 *Igrot Hayim Nahman Bialik*, Vol. 5, pp. 236–277; Avigdor HaMeiri, “Ovdei HaSatan,” *Turim*, June 29, 1933, p. 7; A. Shlonsky, “Lo Tirtsah,” *Turim*, July 28, 1933, pp. 1–3, 6; Moshe Glikson, “B'Sha'at Evel,” *HaAretz*, July 17, 1933, p. 5; Shva, *Hozeh Brah*, pp. 372–377.
 - 53 Katz, *Al Itonim V'Anashim*, pp. 158–159.
 - 54 *Igrot Hayim Nahman Bialik*, 5, pp. 278–279; Schechtman, *Fighter and Prophet*, pp. 191–197.
 - 55 *Igrot Hayim Nahman Bialik*, 5, p. 280; *Kol Shirei H. N. Bialik*, pp. 240–257.
 - 56 Katz, *Lo Ukhal LeHaHashot*; Katz, *Al Itonim V'Anashim*, pp. 159–160; David Tidhar, *BeSheirut HaMoledet* (Tel Aviv, 1966), p. 423.
 - 57 *Igrot Hayim Nahman Bialik*, 5, pp. 307–308, 315; Shva, *Hozeh Brah*, p. 385.
 - 58 Katz, *Al Itonim V'Anashim*, pp. 160–161.
 - 59 Chap. 8; *World Jewry*, July 6, 1934; *HaAretz*, Nov. 15–16, 1931; Schechtman, *Fighter*

- and *Prophet*, p. 200. Captain Alfred Dreyfus (1859–1935), the only Jew serving on the French Army general staff, was falsely accused of selling military secrets to the German enemy. He was exiled to a prison in French Guinea in 1895. Despite a world outcry and early evidence of his innocence, he was only exonerated in 1906 and inducted into the Legion of Honor. Menahem Mendel Beilis (1874–1934) was the victim of a blood libel in czarist Russia, charged with murdering a young Christian boy for ritual purposes. Worldwide protest ensued; a Russian jury acquitted the innocent man in 1913.
- 60 Meeting of Mar. 13, 1934, file 8/311, Tel Aviv Archives, Tel Aviv. For the biblical injunction to save Jews, see *Numbers* 35:25.
 - 61 Meeting of Mar. 13, 1934, file 8/311, Tel Aviv Archives, Tel Aviv. The Reds, who embraced the Bolshevik Revolution for Communism, fought the Whites in a three-year bloody civil war after November 1917. Hasidism, originally founded by Israel ben Eliezer (ca. 1700–1760), later known as the Ba'al Shem Tov (or Besht), focused on personal, ecstatic prayer to reach the Divine world and on the *tsaddik* (superior human being) to lead his disciples. Its opponents, or Mitnagdim, first led by Elijah ben Solomon Zalman (1720–1797, better known as the Vilna Gaon), believed that the new movement challenged the primacy of Torah study and harbored heretical, even Sabbatean, tendencies. Aristobulus II, the last independent Hasmonean king, ruled Judea from 67 to 63 B.C.E. against the wishes of his elder brother Hyrcanus. Both turned to the Roman ruler in Syria, Pompey, who ultimately entered the Second Holy Temple in Jerusalem after Aristobulus's army resisted his rule, and inflicted heavy casualties. Aristobulus was sent to Rome in chains and subsequently poisoned by Pompey's men in 49 B.C.E. before he could fight for Julius Caesar against Pompey's forces in Syria. The minutes of the meeting incorrectly cite the reference to the *Zohar* as "*toref nafsho b'kbapo*." The actual Hebrew is from Job 18:4 ("*toref nafsho b'apo*"), with the comment in the *Zohar* to be found in volume 12 of the English translation of Yehuda Ashlag, *Sulam Commentary*, M. Berg, ed. (New York, 2003), p. 34. I am grateful to my brother, Professor Jordan S. Penkower, for this information.
 - 62 *HaTur*, Apr. 27, 1934; *Igrot Hayim Nahman Bialik*, Vol. 5, pp. 317–318.
 - 63 *Igrot Hayim Nahman Bialik*, 5, pp. 327–328.
 - 64 *HaHed*, May 1934 (no individual day given).
 - 65 *HaTur*, July 6, 1934; *World Jewry*, July 6, 1934.
 - 66 Shva, *Hozeh Brab*, p. 392.
 - 67 Shva, *Hozeh Brab*, pp. 401–402; file S25/899, Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem.
 - 68 *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann*, 16 (Jerusalem, 1978), p. 346; Arthur Ruppin, *Memoirs, Diaries, Letters*, A. Bein, ed. (London, 1971), pp. 266–267; Shva, *Hozeh Brab*, p. 402; Ben-Gurion to Wauchope, July 9, 1934, David Ben-Gurion Archives, Sde Boker, Israel.
 - 69 A. B. Yafeh, *A. Shlonsky, HaMeshorer U'Zemano* (Tel Aviv, 1966), p. 72; Jabotinsky, *Al Sifrut V'Omanut*, pp. 373–378; *HaYarden*, Nov. 20, 1934. For Greenberg's later thoughts about Bialik, see Uri Zvi Greenberg, "*Kemo Yoman*," ed. G. Cohen (Jerusalem, 2002), p. 205.
 - 70 *HaYarden*, Aug. 5, 1935; Abba Ahimeir, *HaMishpat* (Tel Aviv, 1973), pp. 115, 135,

145. For Katznelson's doubts from early 1934 onward about the Revisionists' guilt and his decreasing influence in Labor circles at this time, see Anita Shapira, *Berl, Biografia*, 2 (Tel Aviv, 1981), pp. 408–427.
- 71 Abba Ahimeir, *Ein HaKoreh* (Tel-Aviv, 2003), pp. 26–34. For Ahimeir's attack on a Bialik story for children, in which cunning is deemed better than heroism, see *Hazit Ha'Am*, July 5, 1932.
- 72 Haim Lifschitz and Zvi Kaplan, *Shivbei HaRa'ayah* (Jerusalem, 1979), pp. 284–285; *Igrot H. N. Bialik*, 3, P. Lahover, ed. (Tel Aviv, 1938), pp. 82, 112; *HaYarden*, May 24, 1935. A *kohen* is a Jew from the priestly families. Katz later stated that Bialik, before his death, requested of Glikson to print in *HaAretz* the poet's certainty that the Revisionist defendants were innocent and that Glikson did so. I did not find this statement or one that Beilinson, according to Katz, wrote along these lines in *HaAretz* two years later. Ben-Zion Katz, "LaNe'esham HaShlishi," *HaZeman* (n.d. [1944]), file F30/5341, Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem.
- 73 M. Ungerfeld, "HaNe'um ShehLo Hushma: Dubnov Nifrad MiBialik," *Ma'ariv*, Jan. 4, 1963, p. 14; HaMeiri, *Bialik Al-Atar*, p. 150.
- 74 Schechtman, *Fighter and Prophet*, pp. 203, 245–255.
- 75 *HaYarden*, Nov. 24, 1934.

A Lost Opportunity for Orthodoxy

I

ON APRIL 3, 1938, LEADERS OF THE TWO MAJOR ORTHODOX JEWISH bodies worldwide sat down for a confidential meeting in Paris's Ambassador Hotel. Rabbi Meir Berlin (later Bar-Ilan), head of the Mizrachi religious-Zionist organization, had initiated the conference on the supposition that agreement between these rival groups could be obtained in three areas: Torah observance, education, and Palestine activity. Noting both the unofficial nature of whatever discussion might follow and the goodwill present, Agudas Israel president Jacob Rosenheim sought at the outset for the talks to recognize the fundamental divide. While Palestine lay at the core of Mizrachi's effort — the Diaspora was only "a means to Eretz Israel," in Rosenheim's formulation, Aguda viewed the Diaspora and Judaism as central; Palestine represented "but one point" in its program.

The deliberations that day and the next, ranging across the broad spectrum of crises then confronting traditional Jewry in Central and Eastern Europe, favored the practical. Agudists Rosenheim, Isaac Breuer, Shlomo Ehrmann, and Moshe Blau concurred with Mizrachists Berlin, Ze'ev Gold, Shmuel Brodt, and S. Z. Shragai that the beleaguered masses in those countries required the joint support of their respective organizations without delay. Accordingly, outstanding *yeshiva* deans and rabbis would be invited by Mizrachi and Aguda to a gathering in Vilna, where means to bolster Orthodox life would be sought and a financial campaign undertaken on behalf of the needy *yeshivot*, starting with those in Palestine. A Mizrachi-Aguda committee, to be headquartered in London, would work for the religious needs of Jews forced to emigrate because of mounting antisemitism, while another in Palestine could devote itself to Orthodox praxis there. A different committee would prepare a constitution and relevant suggestions, to be presented in tandem by Mizrachi and Aguda to the Jewish Agency, the British Mandate authority, and the League of Nations, to ensure a Torah-directed life in Palestine. Yet another body was proposed to aid religious workers there by a union of forces and monetary help.

Deadlines were set, various committees were given one month to organize,

and the projected Torah Council of specified leaders was scheduled to convene that summer. A protocol of the two-day sessions still had to be reviewed by both sides and a summary declaration of the proceedings drafted and issued to the public. Ultimate approval would have to be secured from Mizrachi's presidium and Aguda's Council of Torah Sages. The unprecedented exchange, proposing an activist front for the welfare of Orthodox Jewry, thus came to an end.¹

The personae behind Aguda's formation a quarter-century earlier could hardly have envisioned this encounter. The heads of German neo-Orthodoxy, Hungarian Orthodoxy, and the Orthodox Jewries in Poland and Lithuania who had joined hands in 1912 at an assembly in Kattowitz in Upper Silesia differed on various issues (particularly the Germans' acceptance of secular education), but they had united before the outbreak of World War I for the sake of preserving *halakha* (traditional law) as the governing principle of Jewish life. Only an organized movement, they reasoned, could provide a viable alternative to the rapid advance of several anti-religious forces within the Jewish communities of Europe. Zionism's "Negation of the *Galut* (Exile)" and its rabbinic spokesmen were particularly resented, viewed as part of a rebellious attempt to create a secular Jewish society in the Holy Land without Divine intervention. The Tenth World Zionist Congress's inclusion of cultural activities in its program, the strong objections of Mizrachi notwithstanding, provided the final impetus to Aguda's novel establishment.²

Those who set the tone for the Kattowitz assemblage lost no time in sounding the tocsin against Zionism. Echoing earlier denunciations by Lithuania's Chaim Soloveitchik of Brest-Litovsk (Brisk) and the hasidic *rebbs* of Lubavitch and Ger, Rabbi Solomon Breuer of Frankfurt-am-Main branded Theodor Herzl's revolutionary movement "*blasphemie*." Patriotism for one's native land, asserted this first speaker in the spirit of his late father-in-law, Samson Raphael Hirsch, constituted a Divine commandment; it was not Aguda's intent to establish an "Orthodox Zionism." A few delegates objected to Breuer's rebuking Mizrachi's association with "sinners" of the World Zionist Organization (WZO), but no official disclaimer followed. Rosenheim, publisher of the influential *Israelit* and one of the gathering's principal movers, emphasized that work in Palestine constituted "one among many other important areas" of future concern. Resolving that Aguda sought to "take an active part in all matters relating to Jews and Judaism on the basis of Torah without any political considerations," those present established a Council of Torah Sages to decide on binding policy. The final program

avoided any reference to *aliya* (immigration to Palestine) or to settlement there.³

Mizrachi's *weltanschauung* differed dramatically. Founded by Rabbi Yitshak Ya'akov Reines in 1902 as a national-religious federation within the WZO, the movement embraced the motto (coined by Berlin) "The Land of Israel for the people of Israel according to the Torah of Israel." Adopting a deliberately limited nonmessianic activism, Mizrachi backed Herzl's political Zionism as an emergency measure to resolve "the problem of the Jews" (antisemitism), as distinguished from the enduring belief in *halakhic* values and the ultimate Divine redemption. Accordingly, while declaring Palestine to be the movement's major objective, most of the Mizrachi delegation had voted with Herzl at the Sixth World Zionist Congress (1903) to accept the British proposal of a territory in East Africa for large Jewish colonization because it offered immediate relief to the hard-pressed Jewry of Eastern Europe.⁴

At its first world conference in Pressburg (1904), Mizrachi asserted that Jewry's collective perpetuation rested on the observance of Torah and the return to the biblically covenanted Promised Land. The Zionist Congress's decision seven years later to include cultural work in the framework of WZO activities split Mizrachi, with a number of its leaders, including members of the head office in Frankfurt, leaving the organization. Within a few years, the central office was established in Palestine under the direction of Judah Leib Fishman (later Maimon), and the dynamic Meir Berlin began service as the General Secretary of the world association. In 1920, the seat of the world center shifted to Jerusalem, while an agreement was concluded with the WZO that guaranteed Mizrachi autonomy in the field of religious education in Palestine. A wide network of Mizrachi schools ensued, ranging from kindergartens to *yeshivot* and vocational programs, with the *aliya* in 1923 of Berlin (later elected president of the world organization) further strengthening the movement's influence considerably. That same decade, members of Mizrachi youth began arriving in the country, their call for religious renewal and pioneering labor ("Torah VaAvoda") inspiring thousands in the Diaspora.⁵

Aguda's own ambivalent attitude regarding Palestine began to change with the prospect of considerable Jewish settlement following Great Britain's commitment to creating a Jewish national home in Palestine, but tension between Agudas Israel and Mizrachi remained. The Balfour Declaration and San Remo Conference, along with intensifying antisemitism and economic privation in Poland, sparked Polish Aguda youth to press their elders for a

positive stand vis-à-vis the Holy Land. Meetings that were held between Aguda and Mizrachi in 1919 for a shared effort in Palestine came to naught, however. That same year, under the leadership of Jerusalem's Moshe Blau, Aguda became identified with the anti-Zionist "Old Yishuv", the ultra-Orthodox Jewish community in Palestine; in 1920, at its conference in Pressburg, Aguda decided upon creating independent offices for *aliya* and education. Reflecting the majority opinion, Gerer *Rebbe* Avraham Mordekhai Alter, after his first trip to Palestine in 1921, lauded settlement as a religious injunction but lambasted any support of funds tied to the "irreligious" Zionist enterprise. Aguda established separate institutions under Slovakian-born Chaim Sonnenfeld of Jerusalem's Va'ad Ha'ir HaAshkenazi. It obtained official British and League of Nations recognition that the Old Yishuv enjoy a separate status from the organized Knesset Israel and the Va'ad HaLeumi (national council).⁶

Rabbi Breuer's youngest son, whose numerous writings exercised great influence upon university-age Orthodox youth in Western Europe, reacted to the Balfour Declaration and subsequent events in Palestine in a radically different fashion. While insisting that Zionism seriously erred in treating the Jewish people as a purely historical phenomenon, Isaac Breuer saw the hand of Providence operating through the League of Nations' award of the Palestine Mandate to Britain (1922) and the consequent emergence of the Jewish national home. Agudas Israel had to devote its primary energies henceforth to preparing what he termed the "Torah nation" for renaissance in its ancestral homeland. Already sharply at odds with Rosenheim over the latter's triumph regarding a successor to Breuer Sr., as well as over Aguda's decision against refusing admission to its ranks those Orthodox Jews who had not seceded from their local communities in the same way as the nineteenth-century separatist models of Frankfurt-am-Main's Hirsch and Pressburg's Moses Sofer, Breuer called on Agudas Israel to take charge of Jewry's destiny by seizing the divinely inspired moment. Few rallied to this direct challenge to Rosenheim's fundamentally static agenda, with Aguda's first two Great Assemblies, held in Vienna in 1923 and 1929, maintaining the movement's original perspective. Breuer's unequivocally enunciated program "to prepare the people of God and the land of God for their union into a state of God under the law of God" never received the Aguda imprimatur.⁷

Nor did an effort initiated at the end of 1933 by Judah Leib Fishman heal the acrimonious Mizrachi-Aguda confrontation. The Labor Party's attainment a few months earlier under David Ben-Gurion of a majority at the

13th World Zionist Congress, which also witnessed the departure of Mizrachi from the Jewish Agency for Palestine executive, spurred Fishman to call for a world Orthodox congress expressly to counter the open desecration of the Sabbath, *kashrut*, and like manifestations in Palestine. Yitshak Meir Levin, son-in-law of the Gerer *Rebbe* and member of the Aguda world presidium, showed interest, and Meir Berlin wrote to Council of Torah Sages chairman Chaim Ozer Grodzinski seeking support. The renowned Vilna Torah authority expressed reservations in turn, given the different stands of Mizrachi and Aguda in Polish politics and his disparagement of Mizrachi religious schools in Poland. Shortly afterwards, Aguda turned down Fishman's suggestion because Mizrachi insisted on remaining an integral part of the WZO; their respective newspapers continued to shower recriminations against each other's platform. Spokesmen for the two sides did issue a manifesto against Youth Aliya-sponsored secular education for German Jewish children, but Aguda went its own way in establishing two schools in Jerusalem (much to the indignation of local Aguda zealots and Sonnenfeld's heir, Yosef Dushinsky of Hungary) which integrated religious and secular studies. A later meeting in Jerusalem between Mizrachi's central body and an Aguda delegation to discuss mutual needs led once again to a cul-de-sac.⁸

Growing dissatisfaction within Agudas Israel's artisan-worker ranks elicited a far more promising step towards rapprochement. Founded in Lodz as an affiliate of Aguda in 1922, Poalei Agudas Israel sought the application of the Torah's social principles in daily life. The new faction's independent demand for better treatment of religious laborers by Orthodox Jewish industrialists in Poland, together with its strong doubts about Aguda's consistent support for Marshal Pilsudski though his repressive regime did not alleviate Jewish suffering, alienated many of the Aguda leadership. Challenging their bourgeois religious elders, Aguda youngsters from Poland and Germany also began advocating Palestine as the best solution for their members' material distress, and wished to integrate economically, even politically, into the "New Yishuv." Binyamin Mintz, who had made *aliya* from Lodz in 1925, joined with new arrival Ya'akov Landau in mid-1933 to open the Poalei Aguda office in Tel-Aviv against the wishes of Aguda's Jerusalem center. The Poalei Aguda membership in Palestine had been deeply hurt by world Aguda's failure to back an agricultural kibbutz, and the Petah Tikva branch distanced itself outright from the center by recognizing the religious authority of the New Yishuv's official chief Ashkenazic rabbi, Avraham Kook, who endorsed religious settlement on the yishuv's Jewish National

Fund lands. Mintz finally decided to call a meeting in his home with S. Z. Shragai and other leaders of HaPoel-HaMizrachi who had striven since their own movement's founding in 1922 to build up the Holy Land on the basis of "Torah VaAvoda."⁹

While the secret get-together of November 1934 enjoyed no better results, Isaac Breuer's *aliya* in March 1936 dramatically sparked a Poalei Aguda — HaPoel-HaMizrachi agreement. Earlier doubts expressed by Mintz and associates could not be dispelled, but Shragai found Breuer, who was soon chosen Poalei Aguda's president, keen on effecting a united religious workers' association in Palestine. Breuer's lengthy first stay in Palestine at the end of 1933 and his meetings with Rav Kook had deeply made their mark on the Agudist ideologue, who publicly expressed a personal preference in 1932 for "*Galut Edom*" (the Diaspora) over "*Galut Zion*." A draft constitution was drawn up on July 13, 1936, with HaPoel-HaMizrachi (but not all in Mizrachi) firmly behind the document. Having earlier received Dushinsky's nod for the scheme, Breuer was now certain that Aguda's preparatory conference to the 1937 Great Assembly would grant its approval. Yet cautionary letters from the ultra-Orthodox center in Jerusalem, particularly those of Blau, to influential Agudists abroad weakened Breuer's hand. In October he secured approval of only a joint workers' "office" — predicated on final agreement from the Council of Torah Sages. The latter ultimately vetoed even this limited proposal, bringing bitterness to HaPoel-HaMizrachi ranks and exasperation to Breuer, and further reflected the widening gap between world Aguda and its workers in Palestine.¹⁰

The Agudas Israel Center in Palestine, which Levin had reorganized to the detriment of the Old Yishuv's influence in that body, continued to stand its distinctive ground before the British authorities. Following yet another unfruitful meeting with Mizrachi in August 1936, an Aguda delegation pressed High Commissioner Arthur Wauchope to quash the Palestinian Arab rebellion that had begun in April and to sanction unlimited *aliya* at a time of "cruel persecution" against Jews across Europe. Lord Peel and others of the Palestine Royal Commission, meeting in response to that rebellion, heard of the Center's request for full British recognition as an individual entity, and recorded Blau's confidential testimony against the Jewish Agency's award of but 6 percent of allowable immigration certificates to Aguda members. Should rumors be true that the Peel Commission intended to advocate a two-state partition of Palestine, Breuer informed Wauchope, Aguda demanded that at least its communities' religious needs would be guaranteed in any secular state

governed by Jews. Faced with the Commission's public recommendation in July 1937 for separate Arab and Jewish states, the Center resolved to oppose this proposal officially on economic and religious grounds, but to press for League of Nations' approval of Aguda's "religious freedom" in matters of education, *shehita* (ritual slaughtering of meat), rabbinical authority, burial, and like concerns if a secular Jewish commonwealth arose *de facto*.¹¹

The real prospect of a Jewish state in Palestine dominated the proceedings of Aguda's third *Knessia Gedola* (Great Assembly), which met in Marienbad that August. Rosenheim led the nay-sayers in the political committee, highlighting the dangers of increased Arab attack; the limited area assigned to the Jewish domain; that state's deleterious impact upon Jews abroad; and the anti-Orthodox discrimination that would follow in a secular government. Responding to a blistering assault by Breuer on the Old Yishuv's separatist stance, Blau defended the latter, hoped that Jerusalem would remain outside the projected state, and bemoaned the current fate of ultra-Orthodox Jewry in the Zionist enterprise. Sejm member Leib Mintzberg and Polish Senator Ya'akov Trokheim, on the other hand, joined with Breuer in insisting that Aguda right its past neglect by responding to the historic moment, working to ensure Orthodoxy's influence in the future commonwealth. Was the mandated Jewish national home a divinely-imposed task or a satanic contrivance? Breuer directly asked, stressing that he was not a "Palestinocentrist" but a "Torahcentrist" seeking to make the Promised Land the land of the Torah. Mintz joined in scoring the movement's lack of help in realizing Poalei Aguda's hopes for agricultural settlement, and urged those present to rally Jewish youth and call for a united front worldwide on behalf of Torah in the state to come.¹²

The ultimate decision would rest, as always, with the Council of Torah Sages, whose gathering behind closed doors witnessed sharp division during a stormy two-part session on August 23 that lasted seven hours. Elchonon Wasserman of Baranowice pilloried the idea of any Jewish commonwealth even on both sides of the Jordan River, but particularly a small, heretically-inspired state that would signal the beginning of an unprecedented "exile of the Yevsektzia," as tantamount to denying the advent of the Messiah. Dushinsky, Kletzk's Aharon Kotler, and Antwerp's Mordekhai Rotenberg rallied behind this escutcheon, joined by rabbis from Hungary, Slovakia, and Transylvania — primary birthplace of the Old Yishuv leaders. By contrast, the hasidic *rebbe*s of Boyan, Sochatchov, and Sadagura, *Knessia* president Yehuda Zirelson of Kishinev, and Rabbis Aharon Lewin of Raisha and Zalman Sorotzkin of

Lutsk all considered even a partitioned Jewish state religiously acceptable and vital for aiding a stricken European Jewry. Discounting fears of secular Zionist persecution in the projected state, these practical leaders called for widening its boundaries and campaigning vigorously to win Jewish hearts, all the while insisting that the final legislative constitution be based on Orthodox tradition. Asked for his own opinion, the Gerer *Rebbe* rose, cryptically remarked that one had to understand the meaning of the prophetic reference (*Yoel* 4:2) to the division of the Land of Israel, and left the room.¹³

The next evening witnessed a rare display by the majority embracing Jewish statehood in principle. All stood to hear the rabbinical council's pronouncement that the Jewish nation could not renounce the divinely promised boundaries of its Holy Land; a Jewish state which denied the sovereignty of the Torah "cannot exist"; all should help No'ar Agudati in securing the building of Eretz Israel in the spirit of Torah and faith." Upon then reading the Assembly's political resolutions along these lines, Rosenheim injected his interpretation that the *Knessia* had completely rejected the proposal for a Jewish commonwealth. Pandemonium! Trokheim jumped up, wishing to declare that Rosenheim had summarily enunciated an individual position; the latter's acolytes screamed at the senator to be silent; Mintz led some Poalei Agudists to the stage to defend Trokheim, while Mintzberg yelled that even the antisemitic Sejm would have permitted the senator to speak. A rattled Zirelson, who thought the resolutions favored the idea of statehood, announced that they "have been unanimously accepted."

The Polish and Palestinian delegates quickly agreed in a subsequent private meeting that night to halt the assembly's work until Trokheim was appeased and given the platform, while Breuer urged the young delegates of No'ar Agudati to stand firm. Realizing that he had gone too far against the majority sentiment, Rosenheim, following Rabbi Lewin, publicly apologized the following day for the embarrassment caused to Trokheim and announced that he, too, agreed to the establishment of a Jewish state if Orthodox interests could be secured.¹⁴

The rabbinical council's approach echoed that of its chief, Grodzinski, whose bedridden condition due to illness precluded his appearance at the Marienbad assembly. Interested in preserving the Torah milieu of the Lithuanian-Polish *yeshivot* and townlets intact against the challenge of Zionism and other ideologies, Grodzinski had prevented in 1934 the transfer to Tel Aviv of Berlin's Hildesheimer Seminary, objected to renewal of a Sanhedrin in Palestine, and had advised a Poalei Aguda kibbutz not to

settle on Jewish National Fund land. Queried about the Peel Commission's recommendation, the acknowledged Torah "giant of the generation" replied that if a Jewish state were to be created, it would be a nation among the nations of the world — ruled by Jews but devoid of any specific Jewish existence. As Jews could not prevent Palestine's partition by the dominant British authorities — "for we are also captive in exile there," Grodzinski wrote a few months later, *halakhic* rulings of "*heter*" and "*isur*" (permissible and forbidden) did not apply. The reality of Jewry's limited power as regards its political claim to Palestine could allow for humanitarian concerns, such as the particular distress of Europe's Jews, to sway Jewry's response in supporting partition at present. At the same time, the Jewish people's abstract claim to the land, anchored in God's eternal pledge, remained unaffected by our yielding on any part of Palestine.¹⁵

Isaac Halevi Herzog, successor to Rav Kook after the latter's death in 1935, and other prominent associates within the chief rabbinate in Palestine took this dual approach to the Jewish people's claims as well. While joining in a June manifesto against any partition because of Jewry's abstract right to all of the Promised Land, at the end of 1937 Herzog privately articulated a more modified view during the first meeting of Mizrahi's central committee. Jewry had no right to give up its eternal title to the land which one day Providence would entirely restore to our people, the chief Ashkenazic rabbi asserted, but it was permitted to surrender part of its political claim against the British Empire regarding Palestine if no alternative arose. A rabbinical assembly should therefore be called to consider how to guarantee the religious existence of the Jewish state, which is "already in the realm of possibility in the near future." Rabbis Zvi Pesach Frank, Reuven Katz, and Ben-Zion Uziel also found no *halakhic* prohibition against partition. Buttressed by Grodzinski's personal ruling to him a month later along these lines, Herzog would subsequently inform a British commission in confidence that he approved a partitioned Jewish state because of his people's grim straits abroad, but sought protection of some religious matters like marriage and divorce, as well as Sabbath and *kashrut* observance in public institutions.¹⁶

Meir Berlin, staunch opponent of partition and of Herzog's stand, pressed Rosenheim following the Marienbad conference to reconsider the possibility of a coordinated Orthodox effort. This appeal caught Aguda's president then debating whether to continue contacts with the anti-partition rightist Revisionist-Zionist camp under Vladimir Jabotinsky, or to make peace with the more moderate Jewish Agency Executive's pro-partition stand and seek

commitments honoring religious practice, as Blau advised. He turned Berlin's letter over to Levin, who proposed a meeting in either Vilna or Warsaw after seeing Mizrachi's proposals. Written communications would lead to failure, Berlin replied, and only a direct meeting in Western Europe (but not London) between two to three representatives from each side could remain secret and possibly obtain results. Grodzinski wanted such an encounter to take place now, a sympathetic Levin told Berlin during the latter's visit to Warsaw, but Aguda wished its working committee in Vienna to serve as the venue. Mizrachi's president thought the meeting too significant to be staged at that lower level, however, and a surprised Levin could do no more than pass on Berlin's objections to Rosenheim's headquarters in London.¹⁷

By the spring of 1938, Rosenheim came round to a greater understanding with the Jewish Agency. While preferring a bi-national, Jewish-Arab united Palestine and Transjordan under British rule to a truncated Jewish state that would indubitably face massive Arab assault, the Aguda leader had to make preparations for a Jewish commonwealth. He enjoyed little choice, for that January, His Majesty's Government in London announced the formation of the Woodhead Commission to offer concrete plans for Palestine's partition. Accordingly, Rosenheim encouraged further private talks between Blau and Agency political director Moshe Shertok (later Sharett) on "the fundamental traditional-national laws of Israel." These discussions in 1938 would culminate in the Aguda Jerusalem center's joining the *Kofer HaYishuv* campaign for the security of the country's Jewish population.¹⁸

And thus, six months after Berlin's renewed effort began, the road led to a hitherto inconceivable Mizrachi-Aguda meeting at the highest level. Certain that it was Aguda's "hallowed duty to cooperate to the best of our ability in the upbuilding of a stable Jewish commonwealth in the Holy Land," Rosenheim understood that Mizrachi represented his movement's most logical ally in protecting religious freedom for Orthodoxy there. A moving appeal from American rabbis that the two organizations join hands for the sake of embattled Torah in Palestine and in the Diaspora arrived at his office just as Hitler's *Wehrmacht* marched into Austria and Nazis began systematically persecuting that nation's Jewish community.¹⁹ Time was running out in Palestine and in Europe. Under the shadow of these pressing circumstances, Rosenheim, Berlin, and a few of their top associates convened for the historic encounter in Paris, April 1938.

II

The encouraging tone of that two-day conference did not translate into immediate action, however. One month later, Rosenheim confided to Shragai his regrets that the Council of Torah Sages would in all likelihood not approve the broad plan of concerted action, except perhaps a legislative draft for religious affairs in the projected Jewish state. A joint public manifesto covering work in Palestine did call for a financial appeal, and Grodzinski obtained the accord of some council members (including the originally hostile Gerer *Rebbe*) for additional efforts. Yet East European *yeshiva* heads refused any Mizrachi-Aguda interference, while the Council thought a Torah Congress inopportune at present, and opposed a permanent union so long as Mizrachi remained officially associated with a movement that “did not recognize the rule of the Torah and of religion in the communal life of the Jewish nation.” By the end of May, Shragai, who had learned from private talks with Levin of Polish Aguda’s suspicions concerning its “enlightened” counterparts from Germany like Rosenheim, harbored doubts that the agreement would yield any fruit.²⁰

Indeed, Agudas Israel continued on its own way. Testifying before the Woodhead Commission about Palestine’s future, Blau and Breuer pressed for British guarantees of autonomous religious community life within a secular Jewish state and an educational system based upon Torah. Blau and Dushinsky did join Herzog in an unproductive interview with the High Commissioner to halt the hanging of Shlomo Ben-Yosef, a Revisionist-Zionist who had attacked an Arab bus in retaliation for the murder of Jews by Palestinian Arab terrorists, but Aguda’s local newspaper *Kol Yisrael* omitted Herzog’s crucial role. Dushinsky also turned down Herzog’s request for a mutual conference “without any conditions” to safeguard the interests of Orthodoxy in the projected commonwealth.²¹

Another two-day conference of leaders of the two vying parties, held in Jerusalem that summer following Herzog’s personal intervention with his Agudist friend Dr. Falk Schlesinger, failed to narrow the gap. Mizrachi strove to impress its religious ideals upon the *entire* character of the future state, while Aguda wished to obtain assurances of a circumscribed existence free of involvement from the secular Zionist majority. Both Grodzinski and Herzog had objected to the separatist communities which Blau and his Hungarian-born associates surrounding Dushinsky favored in Aguda’s own talks with the Jewish Agency, but the Vilna Torah authority approved of “minority rights” status. Given these sharp divisions, a joint rabbinical body and agreement on

educational systems were out of the question. "You think that all of *am Yisrael* [the Jewish nation] are Ben-Gurions and [Yitshak] Gruenbaums and we are the exception," concluded Berlin. "We say: The whole nation is religious and they are the exception." As if to underscore the point of no compromise, Rosenheim officially informed Mizrachi's president soon thereafter that the Council of Torah Sages had unanimously turned down the Paris meeting's proposal for cooperation on issues relating to the *yeshivot*.²²

Mizrachi, strengthened by Herzog's presence before the Woodhead Commission hearings that September in London, did not waver. It was hardly prepared to accept the Jewish Agency's pledge to that British body investigating the viability of partition that "complete freedom of conscience and free exercise of religion, subject only to the maintenance of public order," would be guaranteed in the new state. The Agency's additional commitment that the Sabbath and Holy Days would be the official days of rest in the Jewish commonwealth did not suffice for a party forever devoted to full Orthodox practice in the commonwealth to arise. Although Grodzinski had suggested to Palestine's chief Ashkenazic rabbi that the option for separate communities be available to guard against secular Jewish domination, Herzog joined Berlin in asserting his deep faith that the Torah could serve as the basis for life in that state. In confidential testimony given to the commission that took issue with both the Agency and Aguda approaches, he outlined various steps whereby this difficult goal could be gradually attained.²³

The impasse between Mizrachi and Aguda particularly frustrated Isaac Breuer. His call at the Marienbad Assembly for an unequivocal ruling from the Council of Torah Sages on the Divine or satanic nature of the New Yishuv in Palestine had gone unanswered. Nor had Aguda's executive committee given a clear response to a request from the Keren HaYishuv, which Breuer headed, for permission to have Poalei Aguda settle on lands of the Jewish National Fund. Much to his dismay, Aguda's stance had also not led to a program of positive action in case its proposals were not accepted by the rulers of the projected Jewish state, while Aguda-Jewish Agency negotiations had gone nowhere. The danger existed, he wrote Blau at the end of August, that we will remain in "complete isolation, cursed by the entire *haredi* [devout Orthodox] world except perhaps the group called 'zealots'." Only the establishment of a novel, strictly Orthodox, combined force, opined Breuer, could achieve the desideratum of waging "the war on behalf of recognizing the right of the Torah."²⁴

Breuer envisioned the new group as the dynamic spearhead to create a theocratic Jewish state, but a party separate from Mizrachi and Aguda first had to merge the various Orthodox groups to achieve this end. The idea had first been broached to him a few years earlier by the late Rav Kook, whose own project after World War I for such an independent association had failed; he now contacted Berlin and a few others to consider mutual activity in areas where consensus prevailed. Berlin preferred a limited exchange of ideas between like-minded religious individuals, rather than Breuer's ambitious scheme to draw hundreds of thousands to "*Brit Emunim*," the name chosen for this covenant of the Torah-faithful. A first large meeting on November 16th in Jerusalem's Hotel Amdursky drew primarily German-born Agudists and Mizrachi and Poalei-Mizrachi loyalists. While some of Mizrachi wondered if this proposal offered the proper instrument, all applauded Breuer's thesis that the Orthodox were challenged to capture the "strong, rich national reality" that marked the yishuv and to "make of the national homeland a Torah home."²⁵

Brit Emunim, for Breuer "the most pressing need of the hour," represented an imposing ideological and economic construct. The great distress confronting Jewry in Palestine and in the Diaspora, read his manifesto, reflected "warning signs from the Creator of the world" that only the complete return to Torah would bring the Jewish people's redemption and ensure the future of the national home. While Mizrachi and Aguda were to continue with their respective efforts, the members of *Brit Emunim* had to improve the spiritual condition of the New Yishuv by personal example. Widespread Torah study; creation of appropriate religious literature; application of the Torah's social principles to daily life; publicity favoring the Sabbath as the foundation of Judaism; support of Torah scholars; strengthening of family purity, *kashrut*, and charitable institutions; aid to religious agricultural settlements; securing *haredi* influence in communal elections – all as a whole could be undertaken in a forthright campaign against the "free thinkers" in Palestine. Yet Berlin's hesitation because of possible competition for Mizrachi convinced Breuer that continued efforts would only augment fragmentation in Orthodoxy's ranks. By year's end he abandoned the bold plan, to the delight of some circles within Agudas Israel.²⁶

Neither Orthodox party could alleviate the screw-press of destiny inexorably tightening about Jews in Europe and Palestine. Following *Kristallnacht*, Herzog appealed to British Colonial Secretary Malcolm MacDonald for a sufficient number of certificates to rescue imprisoned rabbis and teachers of religion from Nazi control; thirty (five for Russian rabbis) were granted *in toto*. Ben-Gurion

called on Great Britain to admit one million imperiled Jews immediately into Palestine, a step which would also persuade the Arab world of the yishuv's permanence. Instead, His Majesty's Government invited Jews and Arabs to the St. James Conference in early 1939, where MacDonald left no doubts as to his anti-Zionist bent. Protestations at the conference from WZO president Chaim Weizmann and Ben Gurion, as well as Blau's eyewitness recollection of Arab savagery during earlier riots against the Yishuv, failed to sway a government that shortly before had ceded the Czech Sudetenland to Hitler at Munich and now was girding for global conflict.²⁷

A sense of impending disaster finally drove Mizrachi and Aguda to approve a united campaign in Western Europe to raise funds on an equal basis for their projects in Palestine. Following private talks between Berlin and Blau while they both attended the St. James Conference in London, Berlin and Rosenheim signed an agreement on February 21, 1939, to cover the next half-year, thereafter to remain in force unless terminated by either organization at one month's notice. This designated "need of the hour," their public announcement asserted, could strengthen the "mighty fortress" of the Torah to restore to Palestine its honor and "harmonize the work of the building with the lofty aim of the return of the sons to Zion and to the sanctuary of the honor of God." While Poalei Mizrachi's Moshe Shapira expressed doubts as to the endeavor's success and leaders of both sides in Palestine expressed shock at the sudden turn of events, Breuer welcomed the limited development as carrying the potential of expanded mutual activity. Two months later, Moshe Unna and Avraham Goldart of Poalei Mizrachi and Poalei Aguda, respectively, drafted a proposal for a religious workers' organization independent of party lines.²⁸

Not long after the ink had dried on the February agreement, however, altercation surfaced in London. A first meeting of the United Religious Palestine Campaign agreed to a Blau-Berlin financial appeal at the Machzikei Hadath Synagogue, a common bank account, and publicity in the London *Jewish Chronicle* and the Yiddish press. Mizrachi nominated its joint treasurer, as per the agreement, but Agudas Israel's president in England, Harry A. Goodman, insisted on not being bound by an understanding between Berlin and Blau as regards who would be nominated to the joint treasury post for Aguda. Not having imagined any difficulty arising from this "mere formality," but unable to force any decision upon Goodman (who had sided with the Aguda world president's anti-Zionist stance at the 1937 conference in Marienbad), Rosenheim proposed that one treasurer enjoying the confidence of both organizations be appointed. Contacted by Rosenheim, Berlin cabled

his regrets that Goodman's "personal ambition shall destroy [the] unity [of] religious Jewry." Until today, the bitter Mizrachi president subsequently wrote to his counterpart in early May, we have still not received a "proper reply, whether affirmative or negative," on all that had been decided in Paris. A breach in the February agreement in Holland and Switzerland led to further recriminations all round that spring.²⁹

Great Britain's promulgation of the White Paper on May 15, 1939, aimed at permanently limiting Jewish immigration and settlement in Palestine, brought some unity of opinion amidst the Orthodox camp. Herzog characterized this reneging on the Balfour Declaration as "a sin against the spirit of God and the soul of man," and dramatically tore up a copy of the "merciless decree" before a vast crowd in Jerusalem. In a private letter to Shertok, Berlin called for non-cooperation with the mandatory power and internal control of daily Jewish life. "Under no circumstances can the Jews see their way to acquiescing in a status of a permanent minority," Aguda's central office in Jerusalem protested to the League of Nations Permanent Mandates Commission in Geneva, and it appealed for protection against a policy "which is calculated to result in the complete extinction of the Jewish population in Palestine and to cause misery and agony to the masses of Jews who wander from land to land." Lacking support from fellow Agudists for his idea to create a moderate *Va'ad Yishuvi Elyon* (yishuv high council) in which Aguda could exercise future influence, Breuer joined Blau in a proclamation orchestrated by many yishuv luminaries against indiscriminate violence by Jewish youth in response to the White Paper.³⁰

Yet world Jewry's escalating peril held no sway on the final act of the Mizrachi-Aguda deliberations that had commenced so auspiciously in April 1938. Whatever slim hopes Berlin might have yet entertained thirteen months later were dashed when he received a letter dated May 28, signed by Rosenheim. A majority of the Council of Torah Sages executive accepted Grodzinski's affirmative proposals for cooperation, announced the Aguda world president, but since the minority included "important and highly illustrious individuals" such as the Gerer *Rebbe* and Rav Dushinsky, "it is impossible to pass on them in silence — according to majority principles — without personal negotiation, which to my regret is not possible at present." As the Council presidium had not reached a positive decision, Rosenheim concluded, Aguda's executive had to give up on implementing the Paris resolutions.³¹

This development did not surprise everyone within Mizrachi's top ranks. Shragai recalled from personal experience that the president of the

Agudas HaRabbonim in Poland had failed in 1920 to bring Agudas Israel and Mizrachi together, that Aguda's support of its young workers in Palestine had been consistently minimal, and that Breuer's only true Agudist ally was Shlomo Ehrmann. When Berlin had visited London during the fall of 1938, he heard from Rosenheim that Dushinsky, who thought it better to sit with Weizmann than with Herzog and Berlin, represented "the biggest stumbling block" to combined effort. The leader of the Old Yishuv zealots, as Blau admitted during a Mizrachi-Aguda discussion, staunchly opposed Grodzinski by favoring separate religious communities in Palestine. Berlin further learned from Rosenheim that even as the Gerer *Rebbe's* fierce opposition to the conclusions reached at the secret Paris gathering had softened thanks to Grodzinski, the latter wisely used his powerful influence on individuals within the Council of Torah Sages before intending to assemble them together for a general vote. Still, the head of the Council, notwithstanding his positive approach to the Paris talks, desired consensus within Aguda above all.³²

While far more prepared to have Orthodoxy adjust to the changing world scene than most of his Council peers — hence his advocacy of the Paris deliberations, Grodzinski adhered to a consistent worldview. His foresight and tact had played a vital role in the pioneering creation of Agudas Israel and of the *Va'ad HaYeshivot* (1924), which claimed hundreds of Torah institutions and scores of *yeshivot* under its supervision in Eastern Europe. Only Torah, he wrote after World War I in the preface to volume one of the *halakhic* treatise *Abiezer*, could shield the Jewish people against suffering. Reform Judaism in Western Europe, Grodzinski's introduction to the third volume of *Abiezer* declared in June 1939, brought about assimilation, which in turn resulted in oppression, expulsion, and the loss of faith even among the Jewish masses in the East. The unparalleled, venomous attacks on Jewry, including the "heavy shadow" over Palestine (gone unmentioned in his earlier preface), must be met with trust in the Almighty by strengthening Torah and particularly the talmudic centers of Poland and Lithuania.³³

The "wrecked ship" of Israel can still be saved, Grodzinski wrote to the Vilna Torah Conference and publicly aired his views in *Dos Yidishe Togblatt* that same month, by relying upon the Creator, whose help can be instantaneous. As for some Jewish youth responding to Arab violence with bombs, he told a reporter who visited his home in Vilna's Magistratska suburb, "we will not take Eretz Israel with force." Such acts of unpermissible revenge against innocent Arabs and fighting England with "wooden swords" could bring destruction, whereas our tradition avers "not by might, nor by power, but

by My spirit" (*Zecharia* 4:6). Trust may not be placed in the democracies, as the most recent White Paper made clear, nor should we "throw ourselves in the twisted direction of Hitler and Mussolini." Politically, Jews had to exercise patience and see what is to emerge from these myriad evil decrees. Perhaps the League of Nations would disallow the White Paper, but would England ask to alter the Mandate? "Non-cooperation" with the British was a "very difficult" matter; Aguda could continue its cooperative work with the Jewish Agency that had been publicly exhibited at the St. James Conference.

As for engaging in religious activities concerning Palestine in conjunction with Mizrachi, Grodzinski went on, we should do so in all matters where agreement prevails except for the area of education. Since, however, "an important minority" of the Council of Torah Sages objected to an Aguda-Mizrachi cooperative effort, he applied the principle in *halakha* of *kol kavu'a k'mekhtsa al mekhtsa dami* (where an object maintains its own identity within a mixture, Jewish law does not say that the minority part is cancelled within the required majority, but considers the former as if it were half of the whole). Further discussion could have resulted in one element within the Council convincing the other, but the difficulty of travel, his own illness, and the Gerer *Rebbe's* weakness negated this welcome possibility at present. In the meantime, Grodzinski concluded as he took leave of the reporter, "we can only lean on our Father in heaven" and buttress Torah and commandments, which lie in our hands.³⁴

Unbeknown to Mizrachi, aside from Rosenheim's citation of the Gerer *Rebbe* and Dushinsky, Grodzinski accorded considerable weight to Avraham Yeshayahu Karelitz's judgment among the minority that opposed any connection with this Zionist party. Heralded by Grodzinski when he made *aliya* in 1933 to B'nai Brak as "a lion who ascended from Babylonia," the "Hazon Ish" had regularly been consulted by the Council of Torah Sages president in all religious and communal matters when living in Vilna. Karelitz had first crossed swords with Mizrachi when he led the heated *haredi* opposition to Isaac Rubinstein's successful candidacy, which garnered the religious Zionists' support, as chief rabbi of Vilna in 1929 over Grodzinski's logical appointment. Like the Gerer *Rebbe*, Karelitz acknowledged Rav Kook's *halakhic* eminence, but deplored the latter's eschatological view of Zionism as the way to achieve closeness to the Divine and spur on the final Redemption. Witness to what he perceived as Mizrachi's laxity regarding the secularist desecration of the Sabbath and *kasbrut* in the yishuv, Karelitz replied to an inquiry from Grodzinski, who deferred to him on other issues relating

to the Holy Land, by opposing cooperation with the party (in his veiled characterization of Mizrachi) of “religion and life”: “And where is no need for *bizuk* [strengthening] there is no need for *shituf* [cooperation].”³⁵

At its world conference in August 1939, Mizrachi took note of Agudas Israel’s official decision against the Paris proposals. Meeting in Geneva just prior to the 21st World Zionist Congress, the central executive summarized the past year’s negotiations. It then tersely concluded that, as Rosenheim’s letter of May 28th indicated that Aguda’s stance was not determined even by the Council of Torah Sages but by “a solitary or anonymous opinion,” all of Mizrachi’s hopes for an actual agreement had been shattered. Berlin pressed his receptive comrades for a type of “collective Gandhism” against the White Paper, while Shragai unsuccessfully backed Ben-Gurion’s activist approach at the Zionist Congress.³⁶

Yet it was all too late. These two frustrated Mizrachi principals who had labored against great odds for an understanding with Aguda could do no more. Together with Aguda opponents and equally powerless fellow Jews across the globe, they could not check the ruthless antisemitism of dictators and the callous indifference of democracies. Ahead, for their people, loomed global war and the blackest darkness.

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The attempt before World War II to coordinate fundamental activities between Mizrachi and Agudas Israel found unity in the former camp, division in the latter, and ultimately failed. Whereas Mizrachi and HaPoel-HaMizrachi leaders applauded such a venture, factionalism within Aguda weakened the prospects for any success. Its world executive and Council of Torah Sages gave scant support to Poalei Aguda’s particular needs in Palestine, including cooperation with HaPoel-HaMizrachi. Breuer’s voice found no echo among the chieftains of his party then or later, as the fulminations in his posthumously published autobiography make abundantly clear. While a majority of the delegates at the Marienbad *Knessia Gadola* turned against Rosenheim and embraced the concept of Jewish sovereignty in Palestine in light of the rising tide of antisemitic assault across Europe, the Council of Torah Sages chose to offer no encouraging response to the possibility of a Jewish return into political history. And a minority group with its rabbinic leadership eventually throttled the Paris meeting’s promising agenda at the decisive juncture.³⁷

Fundamentally opposing philosophies at the outset – one active, one passive — rendered inauspicious the chances for success. Mizrachi and HaPoel-HaMizrachi, firmly grounded in quotidian yishuv life, opposed the Peel Commission's partition offer and objected to the gradualism of both Aguda and Herzog because they wished to forge an entire commonwealth inspired by Orthodoxy within the length and breadth of Palestine's biblical boundaries. They pressed the *démarche* with Aguda and also championed Ben-Gurion's forthright stand against the White Paper. According to their innovative overview, Jews were challenged to shape their destiny, religious Zionists particularly summoned to bring the Torah into the realm of *Realpolitik* as members of the WZO.

Grodzinski's consciousness of exile, rooted in Lithuania and Poland, militated against espousing this dynamic view. The spiritual leader of Aguda ruled out the significance of renewed Jewish historical initiative even when it proved difficult to assert, as he had told Joseph B. Soloveitchik at the beginning of the decade, that "hair would grow on the palm of his hand before the Zionists had a *medina* [state]." The latter's uncle, Yitshak Ze'ev Soloveitchik (the Brisker Rav), regretted that the Council of Torah Sages had voted at the 1937 *Knessia Gedola* not to oppose the projected Jewish commonwealth despite inevitable Arab violence, but he acknowledged the weight of the majority on the council. As the nephew later eulogized his uncle, "no place was found for the state in his system of *halakhic* thought and in his scale of *halakhic* values." Even *haredi* spokesmen, like Zierelson at Marienbad, who beheld the Divine presence in the Balfour Declaration and in the Peel proposal, attributed mundane political activity to the non-Jewish nations and to the Creator. "It is beyond the power of mortal men to help in this catastrophe, and redemption is only in the hands of God," wrote Rosenheim in this manner to Blau shortly after the Nazi *blitzkrieg* against Poland unleashed World War II.³⁸

Viewed in such a context, one can also understand the Mizrachist Yitshak Nissenbaum's belief that the dire period of *hevlei Mashiah* currently befalling Jewry indicated a call to action. The difficult birth pangs of the Messiah, argued this Warsaw rabbi in *Masoret V'Herut* (1939), were divinely exacted punishment for Jewry's grievous sin of not responding earlier to the rebirth of Zion. The footsteps of the hoped-for Redemption were "slowly approaching," he asserted, as reflected in the return of some 450,000 Jews to the Holy Land, where they had established agricultural settlements and built new towns and cities.

Suffering is bound to intensify, Nissenbaum warned, so long as Jewry “stands aloof from upbuilding the land and the founding of its state.” The Jewish nation should now “rise up for the sake of its own Redemption.” This preacher spoke favorably of the “revolutionary” forces in Jewish life, which he optimistically thought would in time fulfill traditional ideals as a new era of promise unfolded. In like vein, the prescient Nissenbaum would subsequently propose to his despondent fellow residents in the Warsaw ghetto that as the Nazis demanded not the Jew’s soul but his very body, all were obligated to sanctify life by diverse manifestations of resistance (*Kiddush HaHayim*) rather than sanctify the Divine Name (*Kiddush HaShem*) through martyrdom as of old.³⁹

For Aguda’s Elchonon Wasserman, by contrast, the current messianic travail signified the Almighty’s stern reminder to hold firm to Torah. As Grodzinski’s brother-in-law saw it, Reform Jews and the Zionists, both rejecting the Divine plan for Israel’s chosenness in favor of an idolatrous attempt to transform Jewry into a nation “like all the nations,” had brought on the punishment predicted in the Scriptures for such rebellion. Religious Zionists, themselves infected with secular ideas, legitimized a leadership of nonbelievers who inculcated a “Hellenist” education to half of the children in Palestine. Wasserman’s *Ikveta d’Meshiha* (The Footsteps of the Messiah) (1938–1939) asserted that Redemption would only come after Jewry, which for the first time would find welcome nowhere, had received all its due retribution from oppressors serving the Creator’s design. Torah study and deeds of kindness offered the one means to come back to God and thereby reverse the disaster. Not an upheaval in Jewish life but a return to basic values and individual acts of repentance could save Jews from this most difficult time in the history of the Exile, with the righteous who survived the test witness to quick, glorious salvation. Consistently, a feeling of inescapable fate would pervade Wasserman’s quiescent response to the Nazis’ campaign of methodical slaughter, even as he devoted himself to Torah and *Kiddush HaShem* to the last.⁴⁰

The Paris conference at the Ambassador Hotel represented a lost opportunity to forge a *modus vivendi* for the Orthodox cause in Israel and in the Diaspora. In the time of their people’s unprecedented anguish, Aguda finally could not transcend long-standing differences with Mizrachi riveted in the bitter clash of ideology and personality, a *Kulturkampf* for Jewry’s future soul. Complimenting James de Rothschild on his eloquent parliamentary speech attacking the White Paper and defending that people’s inalienable

right to the Promised Land, Herzog gave expression to the overriding reality in June 1939 from a temperate Orthodox perspective.

The trouble with us has been twofold. On the one hand, the majority of our religious Jews, rather priests than prophets, have failed to interpret the signs of the times and the ways of Providence and have thus neglected the opportunity offered for the Resettlement and Rebuilding of Zion in preparation of the fulfillment of the divine plan in history through a restored Zion and a regenerated Israel. On the other, our intellectuals have been carried away by G-dless, souless, modernism, and have thus lost their very souls and have almost banished the Shechina, so to speak, from the midst of Israel.

Casting his eye to the uncertain future, the chief Ashkenazic rabbi of Palestine concluded:

Our present trials are, I feel, intended to bring home to us the spirituality of Israel and to make us realize, in some measure at least, that there is a special divine Providence hovering over the descendants of the Patriarchs and the Prophets. How this will be eventually brought about I cannot exactly foretell, but I feel that it will come before long. In the meantime careful guidance is most essential and we must steer cautiously between the two extremes, reckless action bordering on suicide on the one hand, and self-complacent inaction amounting to an acceptance of the Black Paper on the other. May the Guardian of Israel send us His light and truth.⁴¹

World War II, and the attendant Holocaust, erupted three months later.

Notes

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- 1 The first published protocol of the sessions, without citation, comment or analysis, appeared as "Nisayon ShehLo Ala Yafeh," in Yitshak Refael and S. Z. Shragai, eds., *Sefer HaTsiyonut HaDatit*, 2 (Jerusalem, 1977), pp. 517-528. Copies of the original documentation can be found in the Ze'ev Schlesinger MSS. (hereafter SA), Agudas Israel Archives, New York (hereafter AIA-NY), and in file 180D, Mizrahi MSS., Religious Zionist Archives, Mosad HaRav Kook, Jerusalem (hereafter RZA).
- 2 Ya'akov Rosenheim, *Zikbronot*, 2nd ed. (B'nai Brak, 1979); Ya'akov Tsur, "HaMizrahi BeGermania VeHaMashber BaTenua HaOlamit B'Shnat 1911," in Mordekhai Eliav, ed., *B'Shvilei HaTehiya, Mebkarim BaTsiyonut HaDatit*, 2 (Jerusalem, 1987), pp. 17-48; Ehud Luz, *Makbilim Nifgashim*, (Tel Aviv, 1985), chap. 9.
- 3 Ya'akov Tsur, "HaMizrahi V'Agudat Yisrael BaShanim 1911-1914, Zikot Gomlin V'Imutim," in Mordekhai Eliav, ed., *B'Shvilei HaTehiya, Mebkarim BaTsiyonut HaDatit*, 3 (Jerusalem, 1988), pp. 62-65. For early anti-Zionist sentiment among rabbinic circles, see Yosef Salmon, *Dat V'Tsiyonut: Imutim Rishonim* (Jerusalem, 1990), pp. 150-172, 314-339.
- 4 Eliezer Don-Yehiya, "Idiologia U'Mediniyut BaTsiyonut HaDatit – HaGuto HaTsiyonit Shel HaRav Reines U'Mediniyut HaMizrahi B'Hanhagato," *HaTsiyonut*, 8, (1983), pp. 103-146; Micha'el Zvi Nehorai, "L'Mahuta Shel HaTsiyonut HaDatit: Iyun B'Mishnotehem Shel HaRav Reines V'HaRav Kook," in Eliav, ed., *B'Shvilei HaTehiya*, 3, pp. 25-38.
- 5 Y. L. HaKohen Fishman, ed., *Sefer HaMizrahi* (Jerusalem, 1946); Yisrael Klausner, "B'Reishit Yesod HaMizrahi," in Y. Refael and S. Z. Shragai, eds., *Sefer HaTsiyonut HaDatit*, 1 (Jerusalem, 1977), pp. 325-371; Y. Refael and S. Z. Shragai, eds., *Sefer HaTsiyonut HaDatit*, 2.
- 6 Chaim Peles, "Yahasa Shel Agudat Yisrael L'Hityashvut B'Eretz Yisrael MehVeidat HaYesod B'Katovitz V'Ad HaKenessia HaGedola HaRishona (1912-1923)," in Shmuel Etinger, ed., *Uma V'Toldoteha*, 2 (Jerusalem, 1984), pp. 201-224; Yosef Elihai, "HaImut Bein HaMizrahi L'Agudat Yisrael B'Polin BaShanim 1917-1920," in M. Eliav and Y. Refael, eds., *Sefer Shragai* (Jerusalem, 1981), pp. 96-117. For Aguda's attack in Palestine against Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi Avraham Kook, see Menahem Friedman, *Hevra VaDat, HaOrtodoxia HaLo Tsiyonit B'Eretz Yisrael* (Jerusalem, 1982 ed.), especially chaps. 9-10.
- 7 Ya'akov Levinger, "HaTsiyoni HaNilham BaTsiyonut," in A. Saltman, M. Kadari, and M. Schwartz, eds., *Sefer Barukh Kurzweil*, (Jerusalem, 1975), pp. 151-168; Rivka Horwitz, ed., *Yitshak Breuer, Iyunim B'Mishnato* (Ramat Gan, 1988); Salomon Ehrmann, "Isaac Breuer," in Leo Jung, ed., *Guardians of Our Heritage* (New York, 195), pp. 619-646. For a sharp contemporary critique of an anti-Zionist polemic written by Breuer in 1934, see Gershom Scholem, "The Politics of Mysticism: Isaac Breuer's New Kuzari," in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality*

- (New York, 1995 ed.), pp. 325-334. For Breuer's posthumously published criticism of Rosenheim, see Yitschak Breuer, *Darki* (Jerusalem, 1988), pp. 102-111, 198-199. A scholarly analysis of that pre-World War I community by his son is offered in Mordekhai Breuer, *Modernity Within Tradition: The Social History of Orthodox Jewry in Imperial Germany*, Elizabeth Petuchowski, trans., (New York, 1992).
- 8 Geula Bat-Yehuda, *HaRav Maimon B'Dorotav* (Jerusalem, 1979), pp. 379-395; Sirkis? to Fishman, Jan. 5, 1934, Yehuda Leib Maimon MSS., RZA; Breuer-Farbstein *et al.* manifesto, Mar. 7, 1934, file 180D, RZA; Friedman, *Hevra VaDat*, pp. 358-364; memorandum of Mizrachi-Aguda conversation, n.d., 1935 file, 180D, RZA. For the origins of Youth Aliya, see W. Gross, "Korot Aliyat HaNo'ar" (Hebrew), in Brakha Habas, ed., *Sefer Aliyat HaNo'ar* (Tel Aviv, 1941), pp. 83-96.
 - 9 Gershon C. Bacon, "Religious Solidarity Vs. Class Interest: The Case of Poaley Agudat Yisrael in Poland, 1922-1939," *Soviet Jewish Affairs*, 13 (1983), pp. 49-62; Friedman, *Hevra VaDat*, pp. 352, 354-355; Binyamin Mintz, *Mivhar Ketavim*, 2 (Tel- Aviv, 1977), pp. 204-206; Kook to Fishman, Dec. 12, 1933, Maimon MSS., RZA (see Appendix, document number 1); Moshe Unna, *B'Drakhim Nifradot, HaMiflagot HaDativot B'Yisrael* (Jerusalem, 1983), chap. 4. For HaPoel-HaMizrachi's distinctive philosophy at this time, which often led to conflict with Mizrachi, see, for example, Yossi Avneri, ed., *HaVe'ida HaShvi'it Shel HaPoel HaMizrachi B'Eretz-Yisrael 1935* (Jerusalem, 1988).
 - 10 Yossi Avneri, "Heskem ShehLo Butsa", in Eliav, ed., *B'Shvilei HaTehiya*, 2, pp. 167-199; Rivka Horwitz, "Exile and Redemption in the Thought of Isaac Breuer," *Tradition*, Vol. 26 (winter 1992), pp. 77-98; Klein to Garfinkel, Nov. 29, 1990 (fax copy in the author's possession); Breuer, *Darki*, pp. 175-181; Mintz, *Mivhar Ketavim*, 2, pp. 206-208. For Breuer's and Mintz's debates at the time with Rosenheim, see *Darkeinu*, 1935-1936, and Mintz's articles, *Darkeinu*, summer 1935 (Hebrew), copies in AIA-New York. The phrase "Galut Zion," Breuer's earlier characterization, found its first clear exposition in Agudist Nathan Birnbaum's seminal Yiddish essay *In Golus Bei Yiddin* (Zurich, 1920).
 - 11 Friedman, *Hevra VaDat*, pp. 364-365; Mizrachi-Aguda executive meeting, Aug. 6, 1936, file 180D, RZA; Aguda-High Commissioner interview, Aug. 31, 1936, file 103, Central Agudas Israel-Jerusalem MSS. (hereafter CAI), Agudas Israel Archives, Jerusalem; memorandum to commission, Nov. 1936, and Blau testimony, Dec. 21, 1936, both in file 150, CAI; Aguda interview with High Commissioner, May 11, 1937, file 104, CAI; Blau-Shertok meeting, July 14, 1937, and meetings of the central office, July 11, 1937; all in file 122A, CAI.
 - 12 File and newspapers on the Marienbad *Knessia Gedola*, AIA-NY; Mintz, *Mivhar Ketavim*, 2, pp. 208-210, and Mintz, *Mivhar Ketavim*, 1, pp. 268-272. For more on Trokheim, see *Eileh Ezkera*, 1 (New York, 1956), pp. 268-277.
 - 13 Marienbad *Knessia Gedola* file and newspapers, AIA-NY; *Eileh Ezkera*, pp. 50-52, 175-176. Wasserman's comment about the "exile of the Yevseksia" referred to the despised Jewish sections (*Evseksii*) of the Communist Party, who sought to eliminate Jewish life in the USSR in the hope of creating a new, secular society devoid of antisemitism. Mintz, who was invited along with Blau to present his views

at Marienbad,. also mailed a copy of the debate to a fellow journalist associated with Mizrahi. See August 1937 *verbatim* transcription, A 340/23, Central Zionist Archives (hereafter CZA), Jerusalem. In discussing the Peel Commission offer in his annual summary of events affecting the *haredi* world in 1937, Blau only cited Wasserman's stance. *Kitvei Rebi Moshe Blau* (Jerusalem, 1983), pp. 348-349. As for the Gerer *Rebbe's* veiled comment, a later member of the Council of Torah Sages interpreted it to mean that Alter saw partition as inevitable and that Aguda had to fight for determining the religious nature of the new state. Moshe Shapiro, "Of Criticism, Compromise, and Constructive Action." *Jewish Observer*, 15 (Dec. 1991), p. 30. Mintzberg and Trokheim, who were Gerer hasidim, took the position, as evidenced from their subsequent pro-state stance at the Marienbad *Knessia Gedola*, that Alter had supported the reality of partition. The Warsaw Aguda newspaper *Dos Yidishe Togblatt* drew the same conclusion. See Hillel Seidman, "Towards the Establishment of the State" (Hebrew), in Shimon Federbush, ed., *Torah U'Meluba, Likrat Tekumat HaMedina*, (Jerusalem, 1961), pp. 232-233, and Seidman telephone interview with the author, May 5, 1993. For Zirelson's views on Palestine, see Yehuda Leib Zirelson, *Lev Yehuda: Neumim, Ma'amarim, U'Bei'urei Halakha* (Jerusalem, 1984).

- 14 Council of Torah Sages' resolutions, file 197, CAI; Seidman, "Towards the Establishment of the State," pp. 238-241. The No'ar Agudati took Breuer's *New Kuzari* (1934) as its "ideological Bible" to create *Tedaism* ("Torah im Derech Eretz Yisrael"), backed him at the 1936 Schwanenstrasse Hall mass meeting against Rosenheim and the more right-wing Aguda youth of Frankfurt, and eventually joined Poalei Agudas Israel. George Kranzler to the author, May 6, 1993.
- 15 J. L. Kagan and H. B. Perlman, "Hayyim Ozer Grodzinski," in Leo Jung, ed., *Jewish Leaders, 1750-1940* (Jerusalem, 1964), pp. 433-456; Shlomo Cohen, *Pe'er HaDor*, 1 (Bnai Brak, 1966), pp. 315-321; Grodzinski to Yaffe, Sept. 1938, in Aharon Sorasky, ed., *Achiezer: Kovetz Iggarot*, 1 (Bnai Brak, 1970), pp. 107-108; Grodzinski to Herzog, Jan. 17, 1938, Isaac HaLevi Herzog MSS., Heikhal Shlomo, Jerusalem. The *halakhic* concepts which Grodzinski thought did not apply at the time included "You shall show no mercy to them" (*Deuteronomy* 7:2) and the oath taken by Israel not to "rebel against the nations" (Babylonian Talmud *Ketubot* 111a). The latter, stressed by the same minority of the Torah Council at Marienbad which warned against hastening the Messiah's coming, found concurrent resonance among the Old Yishuv leaders and the hasidic *rebbe* of Satmar. For a thorough study, based on *halakhic* rulings, against the oath's modern application, see Shlomo Aviner, "Beirurim B'Inyan ShehLo Ya'alu BaHoma," *Noam*, 20, 1978, pp. 208-231. Grodzinski's approach was later cited in *Lev Ibrah* by Yosef Eliyahu Henkin, who suggests that it would then be equally prohibited for Jews to rebel against the Jewish state. See Yisrael Shipansky, "Geulat Mitsrayim, Geulat Bavel, V'HaGeula HaAtida," *Ohr HaMizrah*, Vol. 22 (Apr.-July 1973), p. 205n.
- 16 Shulamit Eliash, "HaEmda Tsiyonit HaDatit, V'Lo-Tsiyonit, L'Tokhnit Halukat Eretz-Yisrael, 1937-1938," in M. Avizohar and Y. Friedman, eds., *Iyunim B'Tokhnit HaHaluka, 1937-1947* (Be'ersheva, 1984), pp. 59-60, 63; Mizrahi central committee

- meeting, Dec. 8, 1937, file 20, Religious Zionist Archives, Bar-Ilan University, Ramat Gan, Israel (hereafter RZA-BIU); Grodzinski to Herzog, Jan. 17, 1938, Herzog MSS. For other responses of Palestinian rabbis not within Aguda circles, see the various replies to Daniel Sirkis in A340/23, CZA. Rav Kook's close disciple, Ya'akov Harlap, sharply opposed any partitioned state. Harlap letter of July 21, 1937, *Ibid*.
- 17 Shmuel Dotan, *Pulmus HaHaluka B'Tekufat HaMandat* (Jerusalem, 1979), pp. 173-174, 274, 277, 281; Levin to Berlin, Oct. 20, 1937 (in response to Sept. 29), file 8/2/a, Mizrachi MSS., RZA; Binyamin Akzin, *Mei Riga L'Yerushlayim, Pirkei Zikhronei* (Jerusalem, 1989), pp. 281-282; Moshe Sharett, *Yoman Medini*, 2 (Tel Aviv, 1971), p. 376; Blau to Rosenheim, Oct. 26, 1937, file 10, CAI; Berlin to Levin, Nov. 1, 1937, SA, AIA-NY; Berlin report, Dec. 8, 1937, file 20, RZA-BIU; Berlin to Levin, Jan. 9, 1938, and Levin reply, Jan. 21, 1938, SA, AIA-NY.
 - 18 Rosenheim to Brodetsky, Jan. 27, 1938, file 10, CAI; Dotan, *Pulmus HaHaluka*, p. 278. These and related developments led the Old Yishuv zealots under Blau's brother, Amram, to form in 1938 their own restrictive group (Agudas HaChaim, in memory of Sonnenfeld), which by the war's commencement was known as Neturei Karta. In July 1945, this group took control of the Va'ad Ha'Ir HaAshkenazi and effectively split from Agudas Israel. Friedman, *Hevra VaDat*, pp. 365-366. Its vehement opposition to Zionism (including Mizrachi) and to Agudas Israel echoed the earlier denunciation by Hungary's Munkaczer Rebbe (the "Minhat Eliezer") and his spiritual heir, Satmar Rebbe Joel Teitelbaum. See Allan L. Nadler, "The War on Modernity of R. Hayyim Elazar Shapira of Munkacz," *Modern Judaism*, 24 (1994), pp. 233-264. For a valuable overview of the genesis of this perspective, see Michael K. Silber, "The Emergence of Ultra-Orthodoxy: The Invention of a Tradition," in Jack Wertheimer, ed., *The Uses of Tradition: Jewish Continuity in the Modern Era* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 23-84.
 - 19 Rosenheim to Brodetsky, Jan. 27, 1938, file 10, CAI; Apelman *et al.* to Agudas Israel, Mar. 9, 1938, SA, AIA-NY. It was in Austria that Adolf Eichmann, later in charge of the deportations of Jews during the Holocaust, first won his spurs. Gideon Hausner, *Justice in Jerusalem* (New York, 1968 ed.), pp. 34-49.
 - 20 "Nisayon ShehLo Ala Yafeh," pp. 528-529; May 3, 1938 manifesto and Mizrachi to Rosenheim, May 8, 1938, SA, AIA-NY; Levin to Rosenheim, May 3, 1938, file 10, CAI; Grodzinski to Rosenheim, May 17, 1938, SA, AIA-NY; Shragai to Rosenheim, May 18, 1938, file 8/2, RZA; Bizinski report, May 27, 1938, file 1, RZA.
 - 21 Agudas Israel memorandum, May 31, 1938, and Blau-Breuer testimony, May 1938, both in file 150, CAI; Bizinski report, July 1, 1938, file 1, RZA; Herzog to Rosenheim, July 13, 1938, file 11, CAI. For Ben-Yosef, see chap. 9.
 - 22 Shmuel Avidor HaKohen, *Yahid B'Doro* (Jerusalem, 1980), pp. 126-127; Aug. 18, 1938 memorandum of two meetings, and Rosenheim to Berlin, Aug. 25, 1938, both in file 1, RZA. Gruenbaum, a representative of the General Zionists on the Jewish Agency Executive, had consistently adopted an anti-Orthodox attitude ever since pursuing his political career in the Polish Sejm and then in Palestine.
 - 23 A. L. (Arthur Lourie) to the Secretary of the Palestine Partition Commission. Aug.

- 30, 1938, file 150, CAI; Grodzinski to Herzog, Aug. 18, 1938, Herzog MSS. (see Appendix, document no. 2); Herzog testimony before the Woodhead Commission, Sept. 13, 1938, Meir Berlin MSS., RZA.
- 24 Breuer, *Darki*, p. 185; Palestine Aguda executive minutes, Aug. 11, 1938, file 122A, CAI; Breuer to Blau, Aug. 27, 1938, file 174, CAI.
- 25 Breuer memorandum on “a united *haredi* front” (see Appendix, document no. 3), attached to Breuer to Blau, Aug. 1938, file 174, CAI; Horwitz, “Exile and Redemption,” 92-93; Berlin to Breuer, Nov. 6, 1938, cited in Netanel Katzburg, “Brit Emunim”: Tavnit Shel Tenua Datit-Ruhanit B'Shilhei Shnot HaShloshim,” in Eliav, ed., *B'Shvilei HaTehiya*, 2, pp. 161-164; Bizinski report, Nov. 17, 1938, file I, RZA. For Rav Kook's earlier effort, see Yosef Avneri, “Degel Yerushalayim,” in Eliav, ed., *B'Shvilei HaTehiya*, 3, pp. 39-58.
- 26 Breuer “Brit Emunim” manifesto (see Appendix, document no. 4), attached to Mizrahi internal information bulletin #10, Dec. 1, 1938, file 1, RZA; Breuer, *Darki*, pp. 163-164.
- 27 Herzog to MacDonald, Nov. 18, 1938, and Dec. 9, 1938, Herzog MSS.; Bizinski report, Dec. 15 1938, file 1, RZA; reports of Feb. 10 and 16, 1939 sessions at the St. James Conference, file 304, CAI; Herzog to MacDonald, Mar. 23, 1939, Herzog MSS. *Kristallnacht* (“the night of broken glass”), a savage assault across Germany and Austria on November 9-10, 1938, witnessed a widespread destruction of synagogues and Jewish shops, the murder of 91 Jews and countless numbers injured, and the deportation of about 30,000 Jews to Nazi concentration camps. For that event as a turning point in Nazi designs, see Karl A. Schleunes, *The Twisted Road to Auschwitz: Nazi Policy Toward German Jews, 1933-1939* (Urbana, 1970), chap. 7.
- 28 Rosenheim-Berlin agreement, Feb. 21, 1939, file 180D, RZA (see Appendix, document no. 5); Dov Rosen memorandum, Feb. 1939, file HaPoel-HaMizrachi 497, RZA-BIU; Keren Eretz Yisrael-Keren HaYishuv meeting, Mar. 10, 1939, file 180D, RZA; letter to Rosenheim, Apr. 3, 1939, file 180C, RZA; Unna-Goldart agreement, n.d., attached to Apr. 11, 1939 “Summary Proposal” (Hebrew), file HaPoel-HaMizrachi 497, RZA-BIU; Chaim Pick memorandum, Apr. 16, 1939, file 180D, RZA. Breuer privately told Ze'ev Gold that he continued to prefer separate communities of the religious and those favoring “freedom of conscience” in any future Jewish state, while the Mizrahi leader responded by defending his movement's aspiration to maintain Jewish unity without setting up such communities as had divided Frankfurt-am-Main Jewry in the previous century. Gold to Berlin, Mar. 16, 1939, file 1, RZA. Herzog privately made the same case at the time to Rosenheim. HaKohen, *Yahid B'Doro*, pp. 134-135.
- 29 Mar. 8, 1939 meeting; file of correspondence, Mar. and Apr. 1939; all in file 1, RZA; Berlin to Rosenheim, May 2 and 7, 1939, SA, AIA-NY.
- 30 Herzog press statement, May 15, 1939, Herzog MSS.; HaKohen, *Yahid B'Doro*, p. 147; Berlin to Shertok, June 29, 1939, file 1, RZA (see Appendix, document no. 6); Central Aguda Jerusalem office to the chairman, Permanent Mandates Commission, May 30, 1939, file 106, CAI; Central Aguda executive committee, May 22, 1939, file 122A, CAI; “Lo Tirtsah,” June 1939, file 1, RZA.

- 31 Rosenheim to Berlin, May 28, 1939, cited in Moshe Unna, *B'Derakhim Nifradot*, p. 82.
- 32 S. Z. Shragai, "Nisayon L'Ihud HaAguda V'HaMizrachi," *Sinai* (Sept.-Oct. 1977), 87-90; Shragai interview with the author, Aug. 29, 1993; Berlin report, Sept. 23, 1938, Mizrachi World Central Office protocols, RZA; Blau comments in July 27, 1938, Mizrachi-Aguda meeting, file 1, RZA. For Berlin's bitterness about Agudas Israel's continued denial of Zionism and of what he termed "the spirit of national independence," see Berlin to U.S. Mizrachi, July 19, 1939, file 1, RZA.
- 33 Chaim Ozer Grodzinski, *Sefer Abiezer* (Vilna, 1922), Preface; Chaim Ozer Grodzinski, *Sefer Abiezer*, 3 (Vilna, 1939), Preface. Rabbi Shalom Carmy pointed out to me the similarities and differences in these two introductory statements.
- 34 Elimelekh Steier, "A Conversation with the Gaon Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzinski: Regarding Jews, Judaism, and Eretz Israel in Today's Times," (Yiddish), *Dos Yiddishe Togblatt*, June 25, 1939, copy in AIA-NY. I am grateful to my late father, Rabbi M. S. Penkower, for his translation of and comments on this lengthy interview.
- 35 Cohen, *Pe'er HaDor*, 1, pp. 302-314, 334-337; Shlomo Cohen, *Pe'er HaDor*, 2 (B'nai Brak, 1969), p. 34n. Karelitz's letter to Grodzinski is reprinted, with no date, in S. Greineman, *Kovetz Iggarot Me'Et MaRan Hazon Ish*, 1 (B'nai Brak, 1955), p. 114. And a few years later, Karelitz would arrange to have a scathing attack by Elchonon Wasserman on Zionism, *Ikveta d'Meshiha* (The Footsteps of the Messiah), translated from the Yiddish into Hebrew and published in Palestine. *Ibid.*, p. 123. On the Gerer *Rebbe's* attitude towards Kook, see Yitshak Alfasi, "Rebi Avraham Mordekhai Alter MiGur V'Yahaso L'Yishuv Eretz-Yisrael," in Eliav, ed., *B'Shvilei HaTehiya*, 2, pp. 130-131.
- 36 Unna, *B'Derakhim Nifradot*, p. 82; Bat-Yehuda, *HaRav Maimon B'Dorotav*, p. 474.
- 37 Breuer, *Darki*, *passim*. For Rosenheim's continued passive, anti-statist position after 1939, see Gershon Greenberg, "Sovereignty as Catastrophe: Jakob Rosenheim's Hurban-Weltanschauung," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 8 (Fall 1994), pp. 202-224.
- 38 Aviezer Ravitsky, "Exile in the Holy Land: The Dilemma of Haredi Jewry," in Peter Y. Medding, ed. *Israel, State and Society, 1948-1988, Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, 5 (1989), pp. 100-104; Jacob Dienstag interview with the author, June 20, 1993; Rosenheim to Blau, Sept. 18, 1939, file 13, CAI. Explaining why he did not object publicly to the Council of Torah Sages' decision at the Marienbad conference (which he did not attend), Yitshak Ze'ev Soloveichik referred to a biblical incident, explained further in the Babylonian Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 26a): "When Hizkiyahu, the righteous king of Judah, faced the opposition of Shevna HaSofer to his plan to stand up against Sanherev, Hizkiyahu expressed fear that he might not be correct in the face of Shevna's challenge. Shevna's faction consisted of thirteen men to his eleven, and as a majority their opinion would decide the issue. It was only when he was assured that Shevna and his company were a wicked group that he acted according to his convictions.... Ordinarily, even a man of Hizkiyahu's stature must bend to the decision of the majority." Concluded the Brisker Rav: "Here, too, the majority of the *Beis Din* [religious court] decides the issue for all." Cited in Shapiro, "Of Criticism, Compromise and Constructive Action," 30-31. Privately, Yitshak

- Ze'ev Soloveichik would later criticize Aguda's Marienbad decision as leading to compromise with the Zionists, whose impending secular state in January 1948 he again feared would result in great slaughter by the Arabs. Soloveichik to Ahramsky, Jan. 5, 1948, cited in Natan Grossman, "Was it Ever Heard" (Hebrew), *Yated Ne'eman*, Oct. 13, 1989 (copy in AIA-NY).
- 39 Avraham Rubinstein, "Pa'amei Mashiah V'Hevlei Mashiah B'Mishnato Shel HaRav Yitshak Nissenbaum," in Eliav and Refael, *Sefer Shragai*, pp. 118-126; Gershon C. Bacon, "Birth Pangs of the Messiah: The Reflections of Two Polish Rabbis on Their Era," in Jonathan Frankel, ed., *Jews and Messianism in the Modern Era: Metaphor and Meaning, Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, 7 (New York, 1991), pp. 88-92, 97; Eliyahu Ginehovsky, ed., *Rav Yitshak Nissenbaum, Ketavim Nivharim*, (Jerusalem, 1948), *passim*.
- 40 Gershon Greenberg, "Orthodox Theological Responses to *Kristallnacht*: Chaim Ozer Grodzensky ('Achiezer') and Elchonon Wasserman," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 3 (1988), pp. 433-439; Bacon, "Birth Pangs of the Messiah," pp. 92-97. On Aguda's general approach to this theme, see Gershon Bacon, "Da'at Torah V'Hevlei Mashiah: L'Sheilat 'Agudat Yisrael' B'Polin," *Tarbiz*, 52 (Mar.-May 1983), pp. 497-508. On the broad issue of Orthodoxy's varied stances regarding Zionism and messianism, see the incisive treatment by Aviezer Ravitsky, *HaKets HaMeguleh U'Medinat HaYehudim: Meshibiyut, Tsiyonut, V'Radicalism Dati B'Yisrael* (Tel Aviv, 1993). For the persistence of the Grodzinski-Wasserman *Weltanschauung* during World War II, see Gershon Greenberg, "Ontic Division and Religious Survival: Wartime Palestinian Orthodoxy and the Holocaust (Hurban)," *Modern Judaism*, 14 (1994), pp. 21-61.
- 41 Herzog to Rothschild, June 5, 1939, Herzog MSS.

Appendix

I wish to express my deep appreciation to my wife, Yael, for translating these documents from the original Hebrew into English.

Document No. 1

Kook to Fishman, Dec. 12, 1933, Maimon MSS., Religious Zionist Archives, Mosad HaRav Kook, Jerusalem, Israel.

With God's Help, 24 Kislev 5694

To the honorable friends the Gaonic Rabbis and Teachers Rabbi Meir Berlin and Y. L. HaKohen Fishman. Peace and Blessings. After inquiring about your well being with great love.

I have received your honored letter regarding the question if according to Jewish law there is a point not to participate in matters of the JNF [Jewish National Fund], considering the limited language in the contracts regarding the keeping of the holiness of the Sabbath and the holidays.

I must say to your honors that, in my humble opinion, in the Torah which is written truth one cannot bend the Jewish law according to feelings of the heart, but only according to what is explained from the essence of the firm laws, and since the commandment of buying fields from the hand of the Gentiles to the hands of Israel is a simple matter which is an absolute obligation, and our rabbis enacted some regulations whereby the land would be returned to the hand of Israel, see Babylonian Talmud *Gittin* 47b how much they troubled themselves not to let Jewish fields remain in the hands of Gentiles. And in the Mishna *D'mai* chapter 6:2, regarding the reason why Rabbi Yehuda states that a Jew who [for a share of the produce] rents from a Gentile a field that had belonged to the Jew's ancestors must add a tithe in rental payment, it is also not legally mandated but done in order for the Jew to bother to buy the field back from the Gentile and return it to the hand of Israel. And it is hardly a small matter what the ruling is regarding a Jew who buys a house in Eretz Israel [and the Gentile signs the contract on the Sabbath] where the rabbis freed him of their injunction forbidding a Gentile to do work for a Jew on the Sabbath, Babylonian Talmud *Baba Kama* 81b,* even though in all the commandments the rabbis let their words stand even occasionally in a case involving Divine punishment by premature death. Therefore, since the JNF's main concern is to purchase tracts of land in Eretz Israel to remove them from the hands of the Gentiles and put them in the hands of the Jews, it is included in the commandment to conquer Eretz Israel, which is equivalent to all the commandments of the Torah. And the proof is that according to the essence of the law, the Torah obligates us to do this even by means of war. And naturally in war there is always a danger to life, and in all the commandments of the Torah it is written "and he should live by them" (*Leviticus* 18:5), which is not the case when conquering the land [of Israel]. And since we are not occupied at present with conquest by war, but with conquest by means of buying which is in our power, we are thus obligated to try with all our strength to be engaged in this

with all the holy flame of worshipping God, which is in the heart of all faithful Jews.

However, it is understood that we have to be vigorous with all our powers that our influence should bring about the true objective of the holiness of Eretz Israel, which is life according to God's words as Torah and commandment, and we are always obligated to open blind eyes to show them that all the true success of the people of Israel in Eretz Israel is dependent upon the keeping of our holiness on Eretz Israel, as explained in the entire Torah and commented upon in the Kabbala regarding "And He gave them the lands of the nations...that they might keep His statutes" (*Psalms* 105:43-44), but we are forbidden to nullify the most stringent of commandments regarding the conquest of the Holy Land and possessing it because of any inclination whatsoever of the heart. And the ruling is that there is no excuse to nullify doing a positive commandment, even though one may be worried about something in the future, because in this instance what have you to do with the secrets of the All Merciful? You should have done what you were commanded, and let the Holy One, blessed be He, do that which pleases Him, as in the case of Hizkiya and Yeshayahu (Babylonian Talmud *Berakhot* 10a). And even if we are not satisfied with the actions of a portion of the settlers on parts of land bought by the JNF, this also does not absolve us from this commandment at all. And also in this instance we say keep away from transfers of inheritance [by a father from one child who is legally entitled to be heir to transfer it to another child] Babylonian Talmud *Baba Batra* 133b, and in Babylonian Talmud *Baba Kama* 119a, we say [the property of a Jewish informer cannot be destroyed] because he may have good children. And especially since we are sure that at long last all of Israel will repent, since repentance is a promise to Israel, as Maimonides wrote in the Laws of Repentance. And on this it says in *Psalms* Chapter 69: "For God will save Zion, and build the cities of Judah; And they shall live there, and have it in possession."

And it is surely not enough to observe the matters that are explicit in the contract, since we are all children of one Father, and God's Torah and His covenant are with us forever, and the word of God in the mouth of His prophet at the end of the prophecy testifies, "Remember the law of Moses My servant, which I commanded unto him in Horev for all Israel" (*Malakhi*, 3:22), for *all Israel* without distinction of generation, fraction and party, God forbid. And there is no connection between this eternal holiest of obligations and contracts written by order of men. Anyway, whatever is possible for energetic souls through the power of the contract we are obligated to do, as it is said in a similar fashion in the first chapter of [Babylonian Talmud] *Nedarim* [8a] regarding how do we know that an oath may be taken to fulfill a precept?, as it is written (*Psalms* 119:106) "I have sworn, and have confirmed it, To observe Your righteous ordinances." And the Talmud asks there: But is he not under a perpetual oath from Mount Sinai? And the answer given is that one still may stimulate himself [by an oath to do what he is in any case bound to do]. Therefore, whatever we can stimulate to make this [contract] more explicit and clearer is our duty, but we are forbidden to forsake our holy obligation and our constant participation because of some minutiae in the formula. And I really wonder at the directorate of the JNF why would it also oppose writing the word "travels," which is only an explanation of the specific duty which is understood in the capacity of a contract even without explanation of a further undertaking, at least regarding the

matters of the public desecration of the Sabbath and the holidays. And surely there is no greater public sphere than travels, and I strongly hope that all will finally understand our just request and will fulfill it with affection, please God, for the sake of the good of all Israel and the raising of the ray of our salvation within which is all our existence.

And I must be brief at present, and may God place upon us an abundance of peace, and may we soon see the return of the sons to their borders with a crown of beauty all of holy splendor, and may all the Gentiles see that the name of God is bestowed upon us, and may they fear us and not touch God's legacy anymore, which He inherited to us in His holiness forever, because God spoke well of Israel, Selah.

A strong friend who sends his best wishes always, with great Love,
Avraham Yitshak the Kohen

*Rabbi Shalom Carmy pointed out to me that the precise source for this citation from the Babylonian Talmud is *Baba Kama* 80b.

Document No. 2

Grodzinski to Herzog, Aug. 18, 1938, Isaac HaLevi Herzog MSS., Heikhal Shlomo, Jerusalem.

With God's Help, the fifth day of the week, 21 Menahem Av, 5698

He will see in the comfort of God's city, there is the majestic honorable friend the rabbi the Gaon who is famous for his scholarship in Torah and for his piety which precedes his wisdom, the honor of his splendor, our teacher the Rabbi Yitschak Halevi Herzog. May he live a good and long life, may he carry blessing from God.... Regarding legislating the authority of Torah in the Hebrew state which relates to laws — this is really a difficult issue which deserves to be pondered. Upon first consideration I thought perhaps it can be arranged in such a way that the judges of civil law between Jews will be the rabbis, who would be able to summon and issue a verdict which would be valid according to the law, and as for judgments between a Jew and a Gentile it would be according to general law. Regarding thefts and robberies and other monetary matters — it appears from the responsum of Rabbi Nissim ben Reuven [on Babylonian Talmud *Sanhedrin* 46a] that the judgment of the kingdom was exclusively for the courts which ruled according to the laws of the Torah, since it is truly difficult for the regulation of the [secular] state that a thief will exempt himself with double payment and one who confesses to an act involving a fine will be exempt entirely [as prescribed by the Torah], and therefore in such an instance the regulation of the state has to be instituted similar to a [Jewish religious] court being able to issue corporal punishment and monetary fines [as it sees fit even when not warranted by the Torah] etc. And we will yet correspond, please God, on this matter.

It is imperative at this time that all Torah observers and the great rabbis in the Holy Land should unite to take counsel. As for the suggestion by Rabbi Moshe Blau, may he live, to accept as a principle that communities can be separated: It is not obligatory,

but if permission were to be given to those who wish this [then], they should be able to make for themselves a separate community, since truly what will happen if perhaps the [Labor] "Histadrut" will gain the upper hand, and it will head the state, and until now the members of Aguda did not separate except in the Holy City [Jerusalem] because of the discord at the time of the creation of the Va'ad Leumi with the participation of women. It is still not clear at all if there will be communities or a religious council etc. [in the state]. There is a need for consideration and self-protection, and may God provide us with good advice.

Chaim Ozer Grodzinski

Document No. 3

Breuer memorandum on "a united *haredi* front" attached to Breuer to Blau, Aug. 27, 1938, file 174, Central Agudas Israel-Jerusalem MSS., Agudas Israel Archives, Jerusalem.

Isaac Breuer, A Program for a United Front of the Devout Orthodox.

A. Principles.

1. The Torah is the law of the Israeli nation. 2. If the Israeli public will be autonomous, the Torah as the existing law of the Israeli nation will in effect be binding for this public, within the boundaries set only according to the Torah itself. 3. The validity of the Torah as the law of the Israeli nation is independent of the approval of the Israeli people or the Hebrew public institutions. 4. The validity of the Torah as the law of the Israeli nation is binding on all aspects of life of the Hebrew public institutions. 5. Consequently, the Hebrew public in Eretz Israel has to submit in the same manner that it was granted autonomy and obviously if it will receive a sovereign form, in all its actions, including legislation, legal support, and all state administration, to the discipline of the Torah as the existing law of the Israeli nation. 6. It is obligatory for all Jews in Eretz Israel, in the same measure that they accept principles 1-5, to fight in a unified and permanent front on behalf of the Torah as the existing law of the Israeli nation. 7. In order not to limit this war to phrases alone, it is vital to work without delay on a proposed set of rules which should at least include: a. The organizational order of the Jewish public, as it emerges from the law and spirit of the Torah. b. The subject of legislative authority and the borders of its jurisdiction. c. The principles of arranging the maintenance of the law. d. The principles of foreign law. e. The principles of keeping the Sabbath in all public life. 8. After that one has to work according to the basis of Torah law on detailed suggestions regarding every area of public and private law. 9. To the extent that the Hebrew public will not obey the discipline of the Torah, its actions will be deemed illegal. With such illegality the united front of the devout Orthodox is not permitted to compromise, and may not arrive consequently at the conclusion to yield to the Hebrew public, once it is established as an autonomous public by force. To the contrary, its obligation is to fight ceaselessly that the required obedience to the Torah will be fully implemented within the Hebrew public. 10. It cannot, therefore, be required from the Hebrew public in Eretz Israel to maintain a distinction between politics and religion, unless it will be found that without a separation between politics and religion, the devout Orthodox even amongst

themselves will not be able to develop their own community life. 11. The war of the devout Orthodox united front for the legitimacy of the Hebrew public in Eretz Israel is a long-term struggle. It will be a cultural struggle, which has to be executed not by force, but by means of spiritual propaganda. In the next chapter the demands of the united devout Orthodox front will be put together, whose implementation cannot be given over to the struggle amidst the Hebrew public. To the contrary, they have to be the condition for the creation of the Hebrew public.

B.

(A) Laws of Matrimony and the Family. 1. In the Hebrew public one can only be considered a Jew if the individual is considered a Jew according to Torah law. 2. Every [male] Jew has to be circumcised according to Torah law. 3. For marriage and divorce amongst Jews, all their conditions and the manner of their execution should follow the Torah law. 4. In all Jewish places ritual baths have to be maintained as needed according to Torah law.

(B) Sabbath. 1. All Hebrew public organizations must keep the Sabbath in their official work according to Torah law. 2. All public desecration of the Sabbath has to be forbidden and to result in punishment.

(C) Kosher Slaughter. 1. Within the borders of the Hebrew public it is forbidden to kill animals for the purpose of food for Jews, unless it is by slaughter according to Torah law. 2. Within the borders of the Hebrew public it is forbidden and it is punishable for Jews to distribute animals not slaughtered ritually and non-Kosher food for the purpose of providing food for Jews.

(D) The Torah Ministry. 1. A Torah Ministry should be established, composed of a minister, the secretary, and the necessary officers. 2. The minister and officers all clearly have to be devout Orthodox in action and in thought. 3. The minister and the secretary are elected based on proposed lists according to the system of elected lists. Any Jew 21 years and older is eligible to vote. The proposed lists are dependent upon the approval of the Chief Rabbinate. The service of the minister and the secretary will be for the duration of ... years. All the details will be arranged in the election law. 4. The remainder of the officers of the Torah Ministry will be appointed by the minister. 5. The ministry's function will encompass: a. A concern for the subsistence of Torah study in all sectors of the Hebrew public. b. A concern for devout Orthodox education. c. A concern for the establishment of synagogues and study halls and their maintenance. d. A concern for the establishment of rabbinical councils and rabbinical courts and their maintenance. e. A concern for implementing sections II A4 and II b. f. Subsistence of Kosher slaughter. g. A concern for increased acknowledgment of Torah law amongst the entire Hebrew public. 6. The Torah Ministry should work with the greatest joint understanding with the Chief Rabbinate. The ministry is dependent upon the judgments passed by the Chief Rabbinate, which will be determined in the name of the Torah. 7. The political boundaries of the Hebrew area in general are the same boundaries for the conduct of the Torah Ministry. 8. The appointment of local rabbis and main official local administrators of the Torah Ministry will be according to local elections. These elections will be according to section 3, except that not only would it require the approval of the Chief Rabbinate, hut the approval of the Torah Ministry as well. 9. The Chief Rabbinate

is composed of ... members. The members of the Chief Rabbinate emerge from general elections. These elections will be according to section 3, except that the suggested lists must have the approval of a committee of ... members, which would be elected by all the local rabbis and from within their rank, and the approval of the Torah Ministry. 10. The Chief Rabbinate is the highest rabbinical authority of the Hebrew public. Its authority is based upon the Torah and is limited by it. 11. The functions of the Torah Ministry are the same as those of the Chief Rabbinate, except that the Torah Ministry is the highest executive administration, while the Chief Rabbinate is the highest spiritual administration. Both offices therefore have to be in the closest constant contact.

(E) Torah Law. 1. Every local rabbinate will establish a Torah court, within whose jurisdiction will fall all private cases, provided that no written agreement exists in another matter between the two sides. 2. The appointment for the members of the Torah courts will be on behalf of the Torah Ministry and the Chief Rabbinate together. 3. A detailed ordinance will be provided regarding the composition of the Torah courts, and regarding any appeal arrangements that may arise. 4. Verdicts by the Torah court have to be accompanied by an order for implementation from the local rabbinate, and will later be executed by the general authorized organizations. The earlier court which rendered the verdict is authorized to handle appeals against the implementing organization.

(F) Social Welfare According to the Torah. 1. Among the shared functions of the Torah Ministry and the Chief Rabbinate is the concern for social welfare and social justice according to the law and spirit of the Torah. 2. Both these aforementioned administrations have to begin immediately to work on behalf of labor law according to the Torah. 3. Local welfare courts, as well as a central welfare court, should be established for labor concerns.

(G) Torah Education. 1. Both the Torah Ministry and the Chief Rabbinate, as the chief authorities, have to be concerned that opportunity be given in all places for the devout Orthodox education of youth. 2. Attention should be paid to the parents' viewpoints when establishing schools. 3. The Torah Ministry and the Chief Rabbinate are alone the highest authority regarding the devout Orthodox schools, and especially in regard to the internal organization of the schools and the hiring of teachers. 4. Devout Orthodox schools encompass: a. Early childhood schools and elementary schools. b. High schools c. Trade schools d. Yeshivot. 5. Devout Orthodox schools have in general to be part of the local or state schools. The establishing of private schools requires the approval of the Chief Rabbinate and the Torah Ministry. 6. Bible and Talmud are indispensable studies in all the elementary schools.

(H) Finances. 1. Expenses of the ritual baths are part of the expenses of the Torah Ministry. Expenses of the Torah courts and of Torah education will be subsidized from general means. 2. The Kosher slaughter tax would be used to cover the expenses of the Chief Rabbinate, the rabbinates, and the rest of the Torah administrators and institutions. 3. Kosher slaughter is entirely under the Torah Ministry. The Torah Ministry determines the amount of the slaughter tax according to need and collects it. In determining the tax, the Torah Ministry must take into account the social possibilities. The ministers in general can appeal against the amount set by the Chief Rabbinate, which has the final word.

C. Interim Period.

The first Chief Rabbinate is comprised of current members of the Chief Rabbinate of Knesset Israel, with additions which will accrue through negotiations between “HaMizrachi” and “Agudas Israel.” Through these negotiations, the duties of the members of the first Chief Rabbinate should also be determined.

Document No. 4

Breuer, “Brit Emunim” manifesto attached to Mizrachi internal information bulletin, Dec. 1, 1938, file 1, Religious Zionist Archives, Mosad HaRav Kook, Jerusalem, Israel.

Isaac Breuer, A Plan for “A Covenant of the Faithful.”

A. Preface:

a. The different opinions and doctrines amongst devout-Orthodox Jewry brought about the establishment of the Mizrachi Organization, on the one hand, and the “Agudas Israel” Organization on the other. Yet an organization is lacking which will unite all the devout Orthodox, including those who belong to either of these organizations and those who belong to no organization, in all matters where they are of one mind, and which will be able to speak and act in the name of all the devout Orthodox. b. For this purpose the organization “*A Covenant of the Faithful*” was established. Its function is not to take the place of the Mizrachi or of “Agudas Israel.” To the contrary, inasmuch as these organizations will act with all their strength to further their unique doctrines, this organization will confidently take care of functions that are mutual to all the devout Orthodox, without any fear of blurring the differences, which cannot be denied. c. A Covenant of the Faithful is the most pressing need of the hour. The great distress which befell Eretz Israel, the great danger in which the national home is placed, the horrible tribulations that the Diaspora is experiencing — all are the finger of God and warning signs from the Creator of the world that only with the complete return to the Torah will the redemption of Israel come, and the future of the national home is guaranteed it only if it will also be a home to the Torah. The absence of any unification of the devout Orthodox even in Eretz Israel brought them to a terrible disintegration, and weakened their influence on all aspects of life in the yishuv in no proportion to their very considerable numbers. This situation prevented them from filling important creative functions, and brought despair and apathy within their ranks. For these reasons, the establishment of a Covenant of the Faithful has to be seen as the most pressing need of the hour.

This covenant will create by means of written and oral words a self-evaluation of the devout Orthodox, will explain the full substance of the religious ideas in direct relation to the present, will arouse the understanding of the great historical worth of our time, wherein the hand of God is preparing the redemption in a more revealed fashion than in any other time, and of the obligations imposed upon every individual to participate in the work of the community.

B. Members: a. Every Jew who wishes to aid in the existence of the life of Torah is a welcome member of the covenant. b. Women should be organized separately, so that they work for the aims of the covenant.

C. The functions of the covenant: a. The spreading of the study of the Torah by setting up classes everywhere in Bible, Mishna, Talmud, etc. b. The creation of a devout-Orthodox literature, with particular attention to the needs of youth; publication of appropriate books in different subjects, the product of our late rabbis' thought; translations of appropriate foreign books; help and encouragement for new creations required by the hour. c. The establishing of classes for the public to further educate workers and craftsmen in order to expand their knowledge and deepen their worldviews, and also to bring them nearer to all the problems of Jewish communal life. d. To educate young capable people as experts in economics, agriculture etc., and to prepare some of them for significant functions in the covenant. e. Arranging classes where the law of the Torah will be taught in direct relation to the modern economy and its problems and to the law of Torah work, and to explain and detail the idea of social justice in the spirit of the Torah. f. Widespread oral and written publicity regarding the idea of the Sabbath as a basis of all of Judaism. Centralizing and improving activity against the desecration of the Sabbath. g. To influence all public circles to adopt a half-a-day free from work on one of the days of the week. h. Systematic activity to bring back those who became estranged from the spirit of Judaism, especially by means of personal influence, and to take care for providing the needs and religious arrangements among the exiled Jews in different countries. i. Widespread publicity in Israel and abroad for the benefit of the yeshivot, Talmud Torahs, and pre-school classes. j. Taking care of important Torah scholars and providing for them in an honorable manner. k. Establishing and maintaining religious and public institutions which are vital to Jewish life and to work for family purity, to the degree that others will not do this. l. Formation of devout-Orthodox agricultural settlements in Israel, the development of a network of mutual associations, while paying special attention to the need of agricultural training, support of devout-Orthodox loan societies, etc. m. To help in the expansion of the work of charitable and benevolent organizations. n. Combat the disrespect for the Laws of the Torah, both as regards matters between individuals and social exploitation in any form. o. Creating a united front of the devout Orthodox in all the elections to the urban and settlement councils, and in every instance where there is a need and a possibility for expressing a united will for the devout Orthodox.

Document No. 5

Rosenheim-Berlin agreement, Feb. 21, 1939, file 180D, Religious Zionist Archives, Mosad HaRav Kook, Jerusalem, Israel.

With the Help of God, Blessed be He,
The Need of the Hour

In these historic days, in days when the fate of the Jewish nation regarding the Land of Israel is to be determined for evil or for good, in days when the Jewish yishuv in the Holy Land is fighting for its life as one solid and united bloc to defend its rights in the land of its ancestors, and is showing wonders in self-sacrifice and great courage to protect what is in existence and to continue in building and creating, the world federations of

the Jews who follow the banner of the Torah, Agudas Israel and the Mizrachi, recognized that, with continuing vigilance over the unique approaches of each, a joint effort has to be undertaken as a “need of the hour” to insure stamping the seal of the program of our holy Torah on whatever is done in the land and what will be in the future.

These federations recognize and proclaim that our secure future in Eretz Israel and the certainty of the success of the “national home” in Eretz Israel goes hand in hand with the promise of the future of the holiness of Eretz Israel and with the promise of the success of the establishment of a “national home” for the Torah of Israel.

These federations recognize in the duty of the hour to expand the effort beyond the borders of the existing yishuv now in the land, and to be concerned that the new immigrants coming to Eretz Israel, especially youth, refugees of the nations’ hatred, will also upon their arrival in the land be saved for the Torah of Israel and will strengthen the mighty fortress of the Torah to restore to Eretz Israel its honor and to harmonize the work of the building with the lofty aim of the return of the sons to Zion and to the sanctuary of the honor of God.

The success of this effort depends on attaining great means which will enable the federations to work, each within its area and jurisdiction, to achieve this aim, means which can only be gotten with a parallel unification of all our brothers in the Diaspora, who have an interest in the promise of the building of Eretz Israel according to the Torah.

And to that end the federations proclaim a general campaign in the name of and for the Eretz Israel Fund of the Mizrachi and the Yishuv Fund of Agudas Israel, and they invite the community of our brothers in the Diaspora to respond to “the need of the hour” and to aid in the success of this joint enterprise, which carries a blessing for the settlement of the Holy Land and a prospect for mutual understanding and shared efforts between the two federations.

These federations hope that our brothers in the Diaspora will value properly the import of the hour and will prove their appreciation with an endeavor befitting this goal.

Ya’akov Rosenheim, The World Federation of Agudas Israel
Meir Berlin, The World Federation of Mizrachi
2 Adar 5699

Document No. 6

Excerpts from a letter of Berlin to Shertok, June 29, 1939, file 1, Religious Zionist Archives, Mosad HaRav Kook, Jerusalem, Israel.

12 Tamuz 5699

...My opinion is based on three principles: a. Non-cooperation with the local government. This has a very important political value if it is permanent and if it embraces the entire yishuv in its multitudes (let them grow), and if it brings public and private suffering, which demonstrates that our negative attitude towards the government comes from a conviction in our righteousness and our preparedness to fight any force which

comes to restrict our steps in the land. b. This suffering, which will come from permanent and systematic non-cooperation, will bring a significant and influential change of values in our daily lives to depart from the habits which we brought from our countries of exile, and we will progressively get used to original life in our homes, at our tables, also in our dress, and in all forms of commerce and industry. This matter provides a blessing in itself. And this shall be our principal reply, an answer with a double meaning, an answer to ourselves and to our non-dependency on others and an answer to those who wish to enslave us. c. This suffering and the change in life, also in the details of daily matters, commerce and industry, and the need to renew industries and enlarge existing ones etc. etc. -- will attract to us the large Jewish public throughout the world much more so than what we achieved until the present. If our success in agriculture and establishing new settlements during the last three years raised our importance at home and abroad, how much more so will they see in us a single fighting and building force; if from the hardships we shall enlarge industry and increase productivity, then we will stand on our feet in the economic sense more so than we do now.

From these three principles I find that it is the only way to fight the "White Paper." Without this, the English, the Arabs, and the Diaspora Jews and even the people of the yishuv will get used to seeing us only as people who get shocked for an hour and a day, and all the activities which will be executed in the field of immigration and in the field of settlement will be credited to the merit or the obligation of a free people and isolated groups, and the nation as a whole would seem paralyzed and accepting the verdict, just as we became accustomed for two thousand years in every country and also these days in most of the countries of the Diaspora.

Indeed, I also understand and confess that not all that was good for us can be implemented 100 percent, and also not all that we can accomplish will be done at one time. But who is the individual or the nation or even the biggest one, mightiest one, and richest one who even in days of emergency and in time of danger does all according to his wishes and at once [?] Certainly there is always a second side, sometime even a third, but that does not mean that the correct approach is either all or nothing. And I believe with a complete faith that it is in our power to do much in this area, great influential steps, and it will not take too long. But here I have to add: I think that the war in itself against the "White Paper" is not one of weeks and months, but one of many years, and for this we have to be prepared.

And another preface, before I come to offer my detailed suggestions. If amongst us there are individuals or groups who fundamentally oppose any revolt and they see the correction of the situation only in the existing approach -- I understandably do not have anything to do with them in this matter. And so I hereby bring my suggestions as they arise in my mind. 1. To arrange an internal postal system throughout the country with the help of the various bus lines, and to bring a situation about whereby the government post will get nothing from the Jewish yishuv except for foreign mail. 2. The Jewish banks will inform the government administrator that no further negotiations, neither oral nor written, will take place with him. 3. Our municipalities and councils will no longer present to the district governors or to anyone else any budget proposal or any request for approval. 4. To establish internal courts and law in all monetary matters, without needing

to refer concerning any civil matter to the government courts in any way. Note: I know H. Smilansky's claim in this regard, that according to him most of the civil cases involve land matters, and this is dependent on Tabu [i.e. the office for registering immovable property] and for this I have two answers: a. If it is true, we shall exempt land cases from the boycott rule. b. What seems to me better — it is possible to obligate beforehand all those who would come to judgment in our own courts in regards to land, since whoever is supposed to register anything in the Tabu is obligated to do so in the official sense from his own free will, as if he would do it by force were it not for his being judged in a government court.

This is one series of matters which are not easy, and which require much restrained and balanced judgment. It is very possible that the government will ban transporting letters via bus lines; it is very possible that the government will close the banks if they do not respond to the inspector; it is very likely that the government will annul the administration of the municipalities and councils etc. etc., but this is the way of revolt and we should prevail against the obstacles. And we should know one thing which is a preliminary condition to every civil rebellion: ten men are imprisoned, one hundred or every two hundred, but not thousands; one bank or two will be closed, or three, or ten, but they will not dare to close all of the Jewish banks, surely if the Anglo Palestine Colonial Bank will join as well, and it will be perfectly clear that in a case of official closing, all is done clandestinely and one supervises carefully that no Jew will do business with a non-Jewish bank.

The careful supervision, in itself, of the large public that should follow the decisions and decrees and not dare to do the opposite, is obviously something that also has to be worked out and arranged. And in this I see the primary basis for organizing youth in all its sectors and the authority of the Jewish Agency executive on organization and everything similar to this.

And in regard to the municipalities and councils, it is clearly a preliminary condition that in light of the situation which will prevail, the hands of the mayors of the municipalities and councils will not be bound from executing public works. To the contrary, because of the situation, the activities should be increased in this field, and this is something which depends on money and on the attitude of the financiers, namely the big banks, and in this I trust fully that if we follow this path, the money from abroad will flow if understandably we manage to explain the situation properly and as I hinted in the establishment of a propaganda ministry. And in regards to the banks, this is again dependent in great measure upon the wish of the Zionist executive and more than this upon the public mind.

Now I move on to a second subject, the subject of produce. It is not enough to be satisfied with the organization of loyalists or the produce of the land or exhibitions of different types of food or anything similar to it. The obligation is to know precisely how much the yishuv can survive on bread produced in the country without any form of help from abroad. I do not mean only the sifted bread which we are used to, as long as it does not harm one's health. It will be necessary to be content with black bread and with orange bread, which, as I learned, can be made, and everything similar to this. If the local bread is insufficient, it has to be weighed very carefully if we must use flour from abroad that

would be ground here. The same is true for sugar, how much is it imperative to use sugar and can one subsist without it, etc. I certainly do not consider myself an expert in these details, but I see it clearly that we must do thus and no other.

The same applies regarding clothes. It is necessary to find out and determine if it is possible to take out of circulation immediately the selling and using of clothes made abroad. And obviously a preliminary condition should be that no hardship will arise on anyone to wear clothes from a different material than that which we are used to or a different color, and so on. If possible, we should change the [native] dress immediately. If not, we have to know how much we are compelled to use new buyers. And if it can be done without this, then foreign merchandise should be banned from the market without delay. Certainly this, too, requires compensation money and much preparation to expand the textile factories in the country and to establish more. And I say again, I am certain that there will be no lack of money, and not only that, but if it will be clear that the entire internal market of the yishuv is open only for the products of the land, then I am sure that financiers will be found from amongst those who are already in the country, or those who are still living abroad, who will build factories and employ hundreds and thousands of workers.

This is the thought in my heart that if we take this path, instead of the suffering owing to the government decree against our efforts, many sources of livelihood and employment will be found. By contrast, if we do not take this path, there is a fear of degeneration not only in the political sense, but also in the economic sense. And if so, God forbid, the question of immigration will face us in all its severity, not only in view of the White Paper, but also in view of the economic situation....

Haim Arlosoroff's Murder and Israel's Political Divide

I

ALITTLE AFTER 10 P.M. ON JUNE 16, 1933, TWO MEN ACCOSTED HAIM Arlosoroff and his wife, Sima, as they strolled on a moonless night along the beach of Tel Aviv. Shining a flashlight in his face, the taller individual asked Arlosoroff in rudimentary Hebrew what the time was. "Why are you bothering us?" angrily retorted the political head of the Jewish Agency for Palestine. At that moment, the shorter man fired one revolver shot, felling the thirty-four-year-old Arlosoroff to the sands. Sima's screams sent the assailants rushing up the hill to an old Muslim cemetery, where they were lost to sight. After a while, the profusely bleeding Arlosoroff was taken by a private car to the municipal Hadassah hospital; his wife chose to go earlier to the nearby Kaete Dan pension on Yarkon Street, where they had dined an hour earlier that Friday evening, to telephone for an ambulance and to contact British deputy inspector of police Captain Harry P. Rice.

When the stricken man arrived at the hospital, no doctor was present who could carry out an emergency operation. Lacking the proper apparatus for a blood transfusion, a nurse administered a painkiller to Arlosoroff, who called out for Sima and spoke briefly to Meir Dizengoff, the city's mayor. From time to time, he lost consciousness. Only at 12:30 a.m. did operation procedures begin. Summoned from his home, Dr. Felix Danziger discovered that the tube for a saline drip, which should have been ordered immediately, was leaking. He removed the bullet, which had damaged one of the arteries supplying the intestines, but the loss of blood was far too great. As soon as the transfusion needle pierced his arm, Arlosoroff died. The clock read 12:45 a.m. Danziger stripped off his surgical gloves, flung the implements on the floor, and cried: "It wasn't the Arab who killed Arlosoroff but rather this pigsty!"¹

Convulsed by shock and grief, the yishuv (Jewish community of Palestine) united to mourn. Throughout Saturday, crowds streamed to the hospital and then to the workers' Histadrut federation headquarters, where Arlosoroff's body lay in state. The Labor Zionist left-wing and Revisionist Zionist right-wing parties put sharp differences aside, official statements from both bemoaning this enormous loss for the cause and calling for a full investigation. Their respective ranks contributed to the more than 30,000 who attended

the funeral on Sunday, as black crepe draped Tel Aviv's major buildings and consular flags flew at half mast. Eulogizing the victim's honesty and limitless dedication, Dizengoff asserted that the Zionist movement's revenge rested not on the spilling of blood, but on realizing laborite Arlosoroff's ideals and remaining true to the banner of "renaissance and redemption." Berl Katznelson, co-editor of Labor's *Davar* newspaper, and Jewish National Fund president Menahem Ussishkin spoke in like vein before the coffin reached its final destination in the local cemetery.²

The political truce proved short-lived. The day of the funeral, Revisionist chief Vladimir (Ze'ev) Jabotinsky declared in London that he thought Arabs responsible. His Labor counterpart and secretary of the Histadrut, David Ben-Gurion, had wired from Vilna on June 17 to colleagues that young Revisionist "*biryonim* [ruffians] thirsty for our blood" had killed Arlosoroff, but Labor should "not seek revenge." The next day, however, Ben-Gurion publicly averred in Warsaw that he did not believe Jewry had a party dedicated to "political terror," his characterization of the murder. The atmosphere dramatically shifted with the police arrest on June 19 of Avraham Stavsky, a member of the Revisionist Betar youth organization, followed by Sima's claim the next day that he had held the flashlight on her husband's face. In his own eulogy of Arlosoroff at the end of the traditional seven-day mourning period, Katznelson cautioned Labor not to emulate the way of brutal power lauded by other parties. On that same occasion, Zionist bard Hayim Nahman Bialik implored the yishuv to purge Revisionist-related phrases like "fist," "ruffian," "blood and fire" from its vocabulary, and to keep its camp pure.³

Jabotinsky immediately responded to the news of Stavsky's arrest with a public statement, announcing his belief in the young man's innocence, and castigating those who pronounced him guilty well before a court's verdict had been rendered. He accused "a large section of Jewry" of "a shameful pogrom and blood-libel campaign" against Stavsky and the Revisionists for the sake of "party vendetta and electioneering speculation." "We will stand by this innocent man as my generation stood by Mendel Beilis," he ended, also paying tribute to Arlosoroff's last utterance: "I do not believe that the murderer was a Jew." The next day, Warsaw's *Moment* Revisionist newspaper carried his lengthy essay in Yiddish entitled "With Coolness and Steadfastness," which highlighted the fact that the police had only produced the questionable "proof" that Arlosoroff's widow could identify a person whom she had seen on a dark night and for a fleeting moment. The allegation that a link existed between the murder and Revisionist critiques of Labor policy was absurd, Jabotinsky

postulated, especially given the far greater incitement by leftist proponents of "the class war" against the Jewish "bourgeoisie" (Revisionists and the middle class) in Eretz Israel. These malicious tactics, aimed for victory at the upcoming World Zionist Congress elections, he considered intolerable.⁴

Ben-Gurion led the counterattack with a blistering "I accuse!" Halting an intensive tour across Poland since early April to canvas votes for the Congress, the Histadrut secretary-general charged that his arch rival was fomenting civil war and bloodletting within Jewry. Now Ben-Gurion openly declared his suspicion that "a poisoned Jewish hand" had committed the murder. Previous attacks against the workers' party by Jabotinsky, his close associates, the poet Uri Zvi Greenberg, and Revisionist organs like the Palestinian newspaper *Hazit HaAm*, the latter especially critical of Arlosoroff, "create the atmosphere in which political killers are educated." The Revisionists, Ben-Gurion went on, assailed Communists and Marxists, attempted to harm him during a Warsaw appearance, praised the Nazi party when Hitler came to power, and spoke regularly of Labor "traitors." He left it to others to draw the appropriate conclusions from his argument.⁵

Several of Ben-Gurion's colleagues on the Mapai Party central committee, meeting soon after Stavsky's arrest, shared his convictions. Behind closed doors, Zalman Aharonovitz (Aranne) proposed that a concerted effort be made to have every Revisionist feel the mark of Cain on his brow. Concurring, Yitshak Ben-Zvi spoke of "a war of destruction" to be conducted against that party after the investigation ended, while Yosef Sprinzak insisted that the war be extended to all, such as the historian Joseph Klausner, who encouraged Betar and the radical Revisionist leader Abba Ahimeir. We will fight against blood revenge, Berl Repetur emphasized a week later, but "we wish to put an end to the Revisionist Party," and all our efforts had to be directed to this objective.⁶

Other opponents of Revisionist Zionism barely disguised their assumptions as to those responsible for Arlosoroff's death. Histadrut workers in Petah Tikva, B'nai Brak, and Tel Aviv insisted that they did not wish to work with Betar "killers." The poet Avigdor HaMeiri lashed out against those who "chew the flesh of brothers as ambrosia"; fellow bard Avraham Shlonsky, certain that the cancer of Hitlerism affected Gentile and Jew, blamed Jabotinsky and Ahmeir's Brit HaBiryonom ("The Alliance of Ruffians") in Palestine for raising the flag of militancy and its accoutrements as the symbol of Jewish rebirth. His anti-war anthology "Thou Shalt Not Murder," Shlonsky declared, specifically offered a personal reply to Greenberg and the Brit HaBiryonom. "The murderer is a Revisionist," the leftist HaShomer HaTsa'ir's newspaper in

Warsaw trumpeted, and it called for the “total liquidation” of the Revisionist movement and Betar. Yitshak Lufban, editor of Mapai’s *HaPoel HaTsa’ir*, labeled the Revisionists a party marked by “cunning,” “impurity,” “poison,” and “a will for destruction,” a “dictatorial” group that had to be expelled from the World Zionist Organization (WZO).⁷

Some raised the possibility that Moscow or Berlin had engineered the murder. The first report by the secretary of the Jewish Agency Executive about Arlosoroff’s death observed that Sima’s testimony tended to strengthen the opinion of those who suspected Palestine’s Communists, that party recently having suffered one of its greatest defeats in being unable to halt the evacuation of Bedouin at Wadi Hawareth. Furious that the move had transpired smoothly, they organized the uprooting of trees a night earlier at Netanya; the moment also coincided with the third anniversary of the day that Arabs were executed because of their role in the 1929 riots against the yishuv. Soon thereafter, a Jewish teacher in Damascus relayed to the Agency the confession of two White Russians to a friend that they had fulfilled their “mission” against Arlosoroff, revenge that was initiated by the German community in Haifa. One month later, a rabbi traveling by train to southern Bessarabia heard a German passenger tell a fellow countryman that a Nazi agent had killed Arlosoroff because Hitler had ordered the death of some fifty “popular” anti-German world leaders, including that “dirty” Zionist “minister”. The account of that dialogue ultimately reached Jabotinsky.⁸

Ben-Zion Katz remained uncertain. On June 26, the veteran journalist appealed in *HaAretz* for a thorough investigation. He had already heard from a close contact of Jewish Agency treasurer Eliezer Kaplan that Arlosoroff, at the hospital, had told Kaplan that Jews were not the killers – a fact which Kaplan transmitted the next day to a private meeting in Tel Aviv presided over by Dizengoff. The first and major police queries, Katz declared, should be directed to Arabs, who had killed three Jews in Yagur and two in Nahalal. (The Iz al-Din al-Qassam group had committed these murders in April 1931 and December 1932.) The second possibility, first briefly raised by Katz three days earlier in that newspaper and here characterized as a “dubious conjecture,” was that, as with other peoples, two or three crazed Jewish zealots could be responsible for a political murder. His friends and fellow writers Yehoshua Ravnitski and particularly Alter Druyanov, like him General Zionists, objected to the second suggestion. Bialik, however, congratulated Katz for the article; Katznelson before long would publicly cite Katz’s article as proof that Jews could have been the killers.⁹

For Katznelson, the invective flung by the Right against the Left provided strong grounds for suspecting that the former hatched the murder. Initially, he had told Katz that the Revisionists were Arlosoroff's only strong enemies, but they would do nothing so terrible without Jabotinsky's approval, and he thought that the Revisionist leader would never countenance such a thing. By mid-July, however, Mapai's principal ideologue took issue with the appeal by Mizrachi religious-Zionist advocate Daniel Sirkis to halt Histadrut sowing of hatred against the Revisionists and the slide to civil war, since no Jewish group or party was capable of this terrible act. What of Revisionist constant smearing of Labor, Katznelson queried, resorting to such epithets as "embezzlers," "followers of the Red rag and the *Evseksii*," their institutions "mosques," "selling their nation for money," "descendants of Josephus Flavius," "*Sanbalatim*"? Jabotinsky and his acolytes, in his view, had introduced the fratricidal conflict, insisting that the enemy must be destroyed. The Lord's command that the prophet Elijah confront King Ahav, who had killed Navot in order to gain his vineyard, supplied Katznelson's proof-text: "Have you killed and also taken possession?"¹⁰

Exercising less restraint than Katznelson, Jabotinsky's foes branded him personally culpable. Ben-Gurion candidly admitted to a Lithuanian newspaper that he was "less interested in whether Stavsky is the murderer or not, than in Jabotinsky," who, as the head and mentor of Betar, bore "all the general responsibility." General Zionist leader Yitshak Gruenbaum, certain of Stavsky's guilt, joined a proclamation by left-wing Zionists in Poland that Jabotinsky's party be banished from Jewish life. Even the moderate Chaim Weizmann, deposed as president of the WZO two years earlier, wrote his wife Vera after Stavsky's arrest that he had predicted murders before the Congress in light of the "terrible propaganda against workers and all this Fascism in Palestine"; Arlosoroff's killing seemed likely enough after years of the Revisionists' "savage demagoguery." *BaMa'aleh* demanded the excommunication of Betar, going so far as to pronounce that even if Stavsky were found guilty, this Labor youth magazine would declare the true criminal to be none other than Jabotinsky himself.¹¹

In Ben-Gurion's eyes, Zionism's current primary concern involved a thorough cleansing against the "filth" and "malignant leprosy" of those who, although "steeped in Arlosoroff's blood" (*sic*), yet sought to rule. Since mid-March, he had thought that the next Congress would prove critical: if Revisionism triumphed, all of Labor's activity in Eretz Israel would "likely be destroyed to the foundation." Hence his unequivocal program, presented on

July 9 in a long letter to the Histadrut faithful: If an undisputed anti-Revisionist majority emerged from the Congress elections, it should create a commission to examine the Revisionists' "war-like ways," this leading within two years to the entire collapse of "the house of cards of the party of strikebreakers and murderers." A united Labor front should be established everywhere, he stressed, members abroad emulating Palestine's HaPo'el youngsters in combating the "underworld" elements that were centered in Jabotinsky's "hooligan" Brit HaHayal. This new front would press in Eretz Israel for greater immigration, Jewish labor, and land purchase. Such an elected majority, operating with courage and no reservations against "philanthropic lords and the unclean of heart," would save the Congress and the movement.¹²

The results of the elections to the eighteenth World Zionist Congress boosted Ben-Gurion's hopes considerably. On July 19, the *Palestine Post* reported that Labor had gained 70 percent of the ballots cast across the country, resulting in 34 out of 50 delegates. Worldwide, out of a total of 535,113 votes, the Revisionists would garner 96,818. This compared with 55,848 votes in 1931, but their number of delegates (46) now comprised six fewer than at the previous Congress due to the tremendous increase of 300,000 ballots cast overall. Of the 306 delegates poised to arrive in Prague one month later, Labor could claim 44 percent to the Revisionists' 14 percent and, when joined to allies like Gruenbaum and some other General Zionists, command a clear majority. Jabotinsky's forecast in April that the Congress would proclaim a Jewish State on both sides of the Jordan River, condemn class warfare in Palestine, and even demand a legal self-defense organization proved badly mistaken. So, too, his public statement one month before the Congress convened that a big "*Judenstaat* front" might be created, including Revisionists, and that "no blood-libel attempts will be permitted, of course."¹³

While Labor crowed, Weizmann privately hailed its signal success at the polls. Revisionism's anti-Labor middle-class economics, in his judgment "nothing but Fascism," filled him with dread. A far greater fear, however, seized his imagination:

The assassination of Arlosoroff – although still *sub judice* from the strictly legal point of view – cannot fail to cast its heavy cloud over the Congress. I cannot but feel that the mere fact that suspicion (if it is no more than suspicion) has fallen on Jews is a terrible and humiliating sign of the depths to which political controversy has sunk in our midst today.

The architect of the Balfour Declaration concluded that he would not attend the Zionist gathering, since the Revisionists had not been excluded, and he expected "no good to come of it."¹⁴

The suspicions harbored by Weizmann and Revisionism's staunchest enemies received apparent confirmation with a wave of arrests on July 23, three days after the judicial inquiry into Arlosoroff's death began. Primarily on the testimony of a young woman who had recently deserted Betar, Rivka Feigin, the police rounded up Ahimeir (in whose Tel Aviv apartment Stavsky had been arrested), more than thirty Betar members, and a few prominent Revisionist Party spokesmen. The group included such personalities as *Hazit HaAm* co-editor Yehoshua Yeivin and Betar Jerusalem head Yosef Katznelson, both close associates of Ahimeir's. All but two were released within a month. Ahimeir, whose Brit HaBiryoniim came under police investigation as of August 8, would be charged on August 24 with advising and inciting the crime; five days later, Sima identified Zvi Rosenblatt, one of the Betar youngsters behind bars, as the killer.¹⁵

Jabotinsky responded quickly to the mass arrests. He cabled an S.O.S. to British member of parliament Josiah Wedgwood about the "wicked crusade" being conducted against the Revisionists. Particularly galling was the Jewish Agency Executive's hiring of the top four Jewish lawyers in Palestine to represent Sima Arlosoroff. (One, Bernard (Dov) Joseph, would maintain close contact with Bekhor Shitreet, head of the British mandatory's police investigation.) Convinced that Ahimeir and all the others arrested, like Stavsky, had no connection to the murder, Jabotinsky worked strenuously to raise the necessary funds to hire the London barrister and former Jewish Legion colleague Horace B. Samuel. He called on all Betarim to stand quietly and proudly in the certitude that truth would triumph against those who sought to pervert justice. Jabotinsky also wrote a slew of articles in *Moment* casting grave doubts regarding the police's inquiry, beginning with the assertion that Stavsky had quietly departed a Jerusalem pension for Tel Aviv sometime after 8:30 p.m., killed Arlosoroff two hours later, and again slipped unnoticed into his hotel bed early the next morning. An Arab tracker's later evaluation of Stavsky's alleged shoe prints in the sand, he observed, also appeared highly inconclusive.¹⁶

Unbeknownst to the Revisionists, the Labor Party chieftains had commenced their own inquiry, one augmenting the official investigation. Behind this silent effort, spearheaded by Shaul Meirov (later Avigur), Eliyahu

Golomb, and Dov Hos of the Hagana military command, lay an unshakable article of faith: Stavsky and his comrades were guilty. They aided the police in coaching Sima as to the identity of Stavsky and of Rosenblatt, refusing to accept the early conclusion of Avraham Tehomi (the former Hagana commander in Jerusalem who had created the secessionist Hagana Bet in 1931) that Stavsky was innocent, and that no connection existed between the murder and Jabotinsky's adherents. They communicated regularly with two Jewish police officers attached to the case, Captain Shitreet and Inspector Yehuda Tenenbaum (Arazi), as did the Jewish Agency with Criminal Investigation Department (C.I.D.) head Rice. No one in Mapai dared to question the guilt of the accused; party member Dov Sadan (formerly Stock) confessed only years later in a private letter that he was not called to testify for the defense about Ahimeir's actual presence in Jerusalem the night of the murder because "some quick hand intervened." Moreover, when Sadan pointed out to Katznelson's co-editor on *Davar* the "fragility of the prosecution's case and the patchwork of details," Moshe Beilinson replied: "Even if the charge is completely crushed in court, the Histadrut will persist in its judgment."¹⁷

While *Davar* broadcast rumors and veiled accusations emanating from Mapai's inquiry committee, many repeated in Ben-Gurion's public statements, a few non-Revisionist voices tried to stem the tide. The mounting fratricidal war threatened Zionism with a conflagration, warned essayist Moshe Carmon, especially baneful when Jews had no place of rest anywhere in the world. Horrified at this "Satan's dance," in which hatred of brothers surpassed that of antisemites against Jews, Ravnitski insisted that the evil instinct of mutual demagoguery and extremism had to be curbed forthwith. He implored both sides to accept a truce – at least for a short while before and during the Zionist Congress. Zionism was very ill, Druyanov cautioned, Jews always needing a powerful foreign hand such as Hitler so that "our eyes look into the very depths of the abyss." When Beilinson later rejoined that Jews could have committed the murder, Druyanov declared that he had not a scintilla of doubt in the Revisionists' complete innocence.¹⁸

Au contraire for Zionism's laborites. Notwithstanding the decision by Shitreet, the Hagana's inquiry committee, and Katznelson not to rely on the highly suspect revelations of prime witness Feiglin, Mapai was convinced that documents taken by Shitreet from Ahimeir's desk and shared with committee members proved the presence of a Jewish terrorist band in Palestine. Accordingly, Ben-Gurion pressed Katznelson and a few other colleagues, at a reunion in Vienna in early August, that Labor present three ultimata

before the Congress met: disqualify the electoral mandates of Ahimeir and two Revisionists in Palestine and Poland, against whom "individual proof existed" that they had called for murder; set up a commission of inquiry to evaluate the evidence prior to the Congress; and rule against giving any Palestine entry certificates to Betar in the future. The delegates, he thought, would not back Labor's wish to expel the Revisionists from the Congress, "even after the official investigation will prove the truth." The commission, Ben-Gurion added, had to place special responsibility on Jabotinsky in his advocacy of terror. Katznelson added that Ussishkin and Bialik had told him that should the accused be found guilty, the two men would be prepared for all the conclusions drawn.¹⁹

Taking their case to the WZO's Va'ad HaPo'el (Executive Committee) prior to the opening of the Congress, Mapai loyalists focused on stigmatizing the Revisionists as criminals who belonged outside of the Zionist camp. Katznelson asserted that one party afforded protection to terrorist groups within the movement, Jabotinsky having publicly hailed Ahimeir and the Brit HaBiryonim as "one of the healthiest phenomena in our ranks"; Labor was prepared to submit the evidence of its "thorough investigation" to a special tribunal. Jabotinsky lieutenant Joseph Schechtman deplored the speaker's use of unfounded gossip and quotation out of context, the proposed inquiry meant to divert the Congress from external politics and dangers facing Jewry. Citing excerpts from Ahimeir and other Revisionists preaching political murder, Ben-Gurion seconded the need for an inquiry when arguing that "the moral purity" and the very "existence of Zionism" were at stake.

Tempers ran high during the six-day deliberations. U.S. delegate Stephen Wise urged that no inquiry be undertaken until after the British court rendered its verdict. Mizrachi's Meir Berlin (later Bar-Ilan) expressed hesitation about an inquiry, as did General Zionists Yitshak Schwartzbart and Yehoshua Suprasky. On August 18, the council agreed to create a commission of six, which, after reviewing a file of "evidence" provided by Golomb to Katznelson, concluded that a tribunal should examine the definite existence of a terrorist group within the yishuv. Based upon its additional conclusion that the Revisionists may not have done enough to expel this group from their party, the laborites present claimed that Revisionists could not join the Congress presidium. Schechtman retorted sharply: It was beneath Jabotinsky's party to defend itself, especially in the absence of testimony. As one of the six on the commission, Ussishkin replied by calling on the Revisionists to join in suppressing tendencies which would do "incalculable harm" to the cause. Two

lawyers disagreed with the council's decision (Wise privately dubbed it "lynch judgment"), warning against pronouncing judgment on a matter which was *sub judice*, but Mapai's unyielding stance won the day. The eighteenth World Zionist Congress would now open on August 21 in Prague, Arlosoroff's murder hovering over all.²⁰

II

At the heart of the matter lay Labor's wish, ever since its inception, for hegemony within Zionism. Imbued with a fervent belief, to quote Katznelson's formulation, that the workers represented the "active minority bearing the future within it," Ben-Gurion, Ben-Zvi, and like-minded colleagues of the Second Aliya (1904-1914) focused on organizing politically in order to create a new Jewish socialist society in Palestine. The Ahdut HaAvoda party (1919) and its merger with the more moderate HaPoel HaTsa'ir into Mapai in 1930, together with the creation of the Histadrut (1920) to forge a centralized workers' society, reflected these objectives. In the process, at the same time, Ben-Gurion pioneered in delegitimizing rivals like the left-wing of Poalei Zion, Communists, HaPo'el HaMizrachi, and Moshe Smilansky's Farmers' Federation, labeling competitors on different occasions as "renegades", "informers," and "enemies" of Zionism. Uri Zvi Greenberg apparently first heard the vicious pun "this uncircumsized rabbi" (*arel-zeh-rav*) used against HaPoel HaTsa'ir's Arlosoroff, then an opponent of union with Ahdut HaAvoda, while working in the editorial office of *Davar*.²¹

Jabotinsky's creation of the World Union of Zionist-Revisionists in April 1925, its platform to transform Palestine gradually into a Jewish Commonwealth on both sides of the Jordan River, did not spark Labor's ire at first. The founder of the Jewish Legion and the first *Hagana* (self-defense) units in Jerusalem against Arab attack in 1920 had by then resigned from the WZO executive, this exit to signal disapproval with what he viewed as Weizmann's consistent concessions to the mandatory authorities. Jabotinsky, like Labor's leadership, sought to inherit the role of the dominant General Zionists, a loosely-knit, non-ideological bloc composed mainly of middle-class Jews, who would still enjoy a 51 percent electoral majority at the 1929 Zionist Congress. The Revisionists and Labor both railed against the employment of Arab workers, although Jabotinsky championed the bourgeoisie and favored the individual over the collective. As late as February 1928, a newly formed

"Revisionist labor bloc" chose, against the urging of former Labor members Ahimeir, Greenberg, and Yeivin, to press their interests within the framework of the Histadrut.²²

The Arab riots of August 1929 affected this picture dramatically, altering the structure of the Zionist movement for decades to come. The 160,000-strong yishuv, encouraged by the potential of an enlarged Jewish Agency that drew in wealthy non-Zionists at Weizmann's urging, was shocked by the murder of 133 Jews in Hebron, Tsfat (Safed), and elsewhere, along with 339 wounded, as well as by the tardy British military response. London's official reaction, culminating in the 1930 Passfield anti-immigration White Paper, strengthened the shrill appeals of the political Left and Right in Palestine. Protracted economic crisis across Europe, bolstering the diametrically opposed forces of Communism and Fascism on the Continent, played their part as well. By the 1931 Congress, the General Zionists' percentage of the electorate had plummeted to 36 percent, while Labor raised its total since 1929 from 26 to 29 percent and the Revisionists tripled theirs to 21 percent.²³

Radicalization, with neither Left nor Right prepared to compromise, now ensued. Labor persistently charged Jabotinsky with irresponsibility and militarism, Betar's serried, uniformed brown ranks viewed as fascist in nature. For his part, Revisionism's herald ratcheted up critiques of Labor's leftist class-warfare philosophy as "poisonous", warning that the movement's success required both workers and private enterprise. By May 1930, Revisionist and Betar workers formed their own organization independent of the Histadrut; physical assaults that broke out between the opposing forces became a common occurrence. The ideological chasm separating the two camps appeared unbridgeable, Beilinson concluded, the collision between them inevitable.²⁴

The unyielding anti-Marxist stance of Ahimeir, views shared by Yeivin and Greenberg, sharpened this divide. Founder of the maximalist trend in Revisionism, Ahimeir seconded Otto Spengler's revulsion towards then declining Western liberalism, and thought nationalism and Marxism irreconcilable. He found especially attractive Mussolini's authoritarian rule in Italy, with its violent opposition to Socialism and Communism, its romantic glorification of the leader and an elitist youth, and a corporate economy – virtues concomitantly trumpeted by the likes of Winston Churchill, George Bernard Shaw, and many of the West's business class. The severe economic crisis which hit the yishuv during the Fourth Aliya (1924-1928) further strengthened his conviction that Labor's leadership, with its gradualism and neglect of the middle class, had to be replaced. Ahimeir's provocative "From a

Fascist's Notebook," columns published in *Do'ar HaYom* from October 1928 on once he switched to the Revisionist camp, urged Jabotinsky to become Zionism's "*Duce*" and Betar youth to assume the role of a fighting avant-garde. The Jewish Nation, he opined, would be created not through the gradual methods of Labor, but thanks to "a messiah riding aboard a tank."²⁵

The traumatic 1929 riots fueled Ahimeir's radical assumptions about the mandatory power. While Greenberg had already called in 1923 for "*biryonom*" who dreamt of the restoration of "the Kingdom of Israel" and in 1928 for a Jewish armed force to conquer Palestine, and Yeivin blasted the WZO executive for relying on England, Ahimeir championed Lenin, Mussolini, and Kemal Ataturk as models for national redemption. Weizmann's public suggestion of Palestine's being "shared by two nations" he characterized as completing "the work of destruction," requiring Jews to sever themselves from "the dead body." On October 9, 1930, Ahimeir and some of his followers demonstrated against visiting Colonial Under Secretary Drummond Shiels, protesting that the latter had come to "dig Zionism's grave" with the approval of "the traitorous executive." He and four Betarim, accepting his order to be arrested and not flee the police, were manhandled and put in prison for one week. Not long thereafter, Ahimeir insisted that a war for independence which rested on a dynamic minority, following the example of recent Jewish heroes like Sarah Aaronsohn, Joseph Trumpeldor, and Shalom Schwartzbard, could strive towards the ideal: a state in Eretz Israel matching the boundaries of King David's reign.²⁶

This first call to revolt against Great Britain did not meet with Jabotinsky's approval. His abiding faith in British parliamentarianism, in liberal values, and in open diplomacy precluded the break demanded by Ahimeir and his small circle. The 1929 Arab riots led Revisionism's standard bearer to press for a renewal of the Jewish Legion, all the while preferring that a Jewish commonwealth become part of Britain's dominions. Privately, he warned against the "hysteria" to be found in *Do'ar HaYom*, and refused to accept the mantle of "*Duce*" or follow Ahimeir's path, revolted as he was by any form of Fascism. Still, in November 1930 Ahimeir was chosen a member of the Revisionists' central committee; under his influence, its Palestinian wing pressed for the party's withdrawal from the WZO if the movement refused to declare its ultimate objective to be the creation of a Jewish majority in Palestine. Two months later, Ahimeir and Greenberg joined other Revisionists as new members of the yishuv's third Elected Assembly.²⁷

The 1931 Zionist Congress that summer, coming five months after Prime

Minister Ramsay MacDonald reversed the Passfield White Paper, proved to be a watershed for Jabotinsky's party. Mizrachi, the so-called Radicals, and even some General Zionists joined him in excoriating Weizmann, who resigned after an ill-advised interview quoted him as saying that the development of Jewish civilization and culture did not require a majority in Palestine. Failing, however, to have the Congress endorse a Jewish majority and Jewish statehood on both sides of the Jordan River, the Revisionist leader tore up his delegate card and stormed out of the hall. Moderate General Zionists such as Weizmann and Bialik enjoyed some consolation: Haim Arlosoroff, able defender of Weizmann's approach at the proceedings, became head of the Jewish Agency's political office.²⁸

During the next year, Jabotinsky increasingly drew closer to the maximalists. Accepting Yosef Katznelson's analysis that the Arabs were but an instrument of London's anti-Zionism, Ahimeir and a few others, spontaneously organizing themselves under the name Brit HaBiryoniim after the zealots who had fought both Roman rule and fellow Jews favoring compromise with the enemy, tried to hamper a census of Palestine's population. Jabotinsky applauded the unsuccessful effort, begun in the fear that High Commissioner John Chancellor sought to introduce a parliament that would perpetuate the Jews' minority status; 123 protesters landed in jail. In October, he accused Britain of "treachery," and called upon Jewish youth to learn to fire weapons. *Hazit HaAm*, founded by Ahimeir and Yeivin in January 1932, featured Jabotinsky among its major contributors. The following month, Revisionist youth inspired by the Biryoniim halted a lecture at the Hebrew University by Norman Bentwich, inaugurating a chair in international peace studies, because the speaker backed Brit Shalom's support of a bi-national parity agreement with the country's Arab population. Jabotinsky hailed those fifteen arrested for their "adventurism," including Ahimeir, whom he publicly saluted as "our teacher and master." For the first time, the Revisionist chief advocated steps against restrictive immigration and paying taxes, together with favoring "disturbances" and serving time in prison. Encouraged, Ahimeir pressed Jewish youth to adopt "revolutionary Zionism" even as he opposed Jabotinsky's public appeal for a worldwide petition to gain the political goals of Revisionism.²⁹

Jabotinsky did not give total support to Ahimeir and like-minded Palestinian activists led by Wolfgang von Weisl, as the fifth Revisionist World Conference in August 1932 made clear. While charging that "the present Mandate has become unlawful," he refused to secede from the WZO.

Jabotinsky categorically refused the youngsters' call for a dictatorial regime, avowing that he believed in "the ideological patrimony" of nineteenth-century liberal paragons Garibaldi and Lincoln, Gladstone and Hugo. When columns by Ahimeir and by Yeivin raised the possibility of political terror, and even described "German Nazism" (Hitler winning an impressive victory in the elections to the Reichstag that July) as another national liberation movement which should be emulated, the party promptly dissociated itself from the views expressed in *Hazit HaAm*. Jabotinsky went further in private, warning Yeivin that their "*sans-culottisme*", if victorious, would drive him from the Revisionist cause.³⁰

The Zionist establishment, and Labor in particular, drew no distinctions between Jabotinsky and his right wing. *HaAretz's* editor, Moshe Glikson, had begun equating Revisionism with Fascism from 1928 onward (he denied Ahimeir future entry to its columns that March), as did counterparts on *Davar*. Revisionism, Weizmann informed an American follower in 1931, represented "Hitlerism all over in its worst possible form." After a period of quiet, antagonism flared up in mid-1932 between Histadrut workers and Betar laborers in Herzliya and Tel Aviv, prompting *BaMa'aleh* to call for active retaliation against Betar "brutality"; in September the Zionist executive deprived the Revisionist party of its status as a "separate union." That fall, the Histadrut commenced a long but ultimately unsuccessful strike against the Frumin plant, opposed by Betar workers, at the same time that Jabotinsky published an essay "Yes, to Break" regarding the Labor federation's monopoly. Furious, Ben-Gurion and the majority of his colleagues on the Histadrut's General Council backed resorting to violence against any who would not toe their organization's line.³¹

The New Year 1933 brought Labor's acrimony against the Right to the fore. "I am first and foremost interested in the destruction of Revisionism among youth and the masses," Ben-Gurion emphasized to a correspondent in early January. At a public gathering in Tel Aviv on February 18, self-restraint was cast to the winds as he called Jabotinsky "Vladimir Hitler" for inciting in Berlin against Communist control of Zionism, and he asserted that the "Jewish Hitlerites" in Palestine "pray for bloodshed." Betar's objection to a Histadrut strike against agricultural employers in Petah Tikva drew his and Yitshak Tabenkin's fire; Katznelson, Beilinson, and some others favored compromise. A particularly vicious attack on the seventh day of Passover against Betar-allied children by organized Labor forces in Tel Aviv elicited support from Golomb and Repetur of Mapai's central committee (Katznelson submitted his resignation), with the

Tel Aviv worker's council, *BaMa'aleh*, and *Davar* also justifying the violence against "Hitler-uniformed" provocateurs. On May 26, under the stinging title "Satan's Ally," *HaPoel HaTsa'ir's* Lufban directly linked Jabotinsky to Hitler. Five days later, a Betar gathering in Haifa came under fierce Labor assault.³²

Jabotinsky actually spearheaded an anti-Hitler crusade at that very moment, warning in two articles soon after the first official persecution of Jews in Germany that if the *Fuehrer's* regime were "destined to stay, Jewry is doomed." On April 28, he called from the Polish radio in Warsaw for a worldwide boycott of the Third Reich and for a Jewish commonwealth in Palestine as the only adequate reply to the Nazi threat. Sixty-nine pro-boycott meetings throughout Eastern Europe followed. Jabotinsky refrained from replying to Ben-Gurion's false charge about personally inciting in Berlin against the Left, but sternly informed *Hazit HaAm's* editors on May 17 that their finding in Hitlerism some form of a 'national movement' was "sheer ignorance." Should the editors not halt unconditionally "this outrage," he would demand their expulsion from the Revisionist party and break off personal relations with anyone so involved. Four days earlier, members of Brit HaBiryonim had burned the door of Germany's consulate in Jerusalem, followed on the morrow by removing the swastika-laden flag atop the consulate in Jaffa (Yafo) and, two weeks later, in Jerusalem. These activities, Ahimeir replied to Jabotinsky, clearly revealed that the maximalists were fighting Hitler in their own fashion.³³

The Revisionists' boycott crusade also translated into strong attacks in *Hazit Ha'Am* on Arlosoroff, a target of their vitriol ever since he had defended Weizmann at the 1931 Zionist Congress and became the Executive's political director. Beginning in 1932, the maximalists' newspaper assailed the "*wunderkind*" for approving the transfer of Jewish lands to "the students of the Mufti and Jamal Husseini"; flying from Jerusalem to Deganya Bet and back with High Commissioner Arthur Wauchope while Britain was "liquidating" Zionism; and refusing to share diplomatic affairs with less compromising members of the Jewish Agency Executive. They also accused "this uncircumcised rabbi" of acceding to the mandatory's wish to set up a pro-Arab Legislative Council, as well as of closing the gates of Eretz Israel to the middle class and Betar loyalists. The announced negotiating by "the Jewish diplomat" with Nazi authorities in May 1933 of a "*ba'avara*" ("transfer agreement") scheme, enabling German Jews to liquidate some of their property through the export of German goods to Palestine, was viewed as particularly abominable. Thus the headlines: "From the Liberal Apostasy in

Germany to the Socialist Apostasy in Eretz Israel" and "The Jewish S.D. is Sabotaging Our War on Hitlerism."³⁴

On the morning of June 16, 1933, this vilification came to a head with Yohanan Pogrovinsky's article in *Hazit Ha'Am*, "The Alliance of Stalin – Ben-Gurion – Hitler." Responding three weeks after Lufban's inciting essay against Jabotinsky, the former secretary of both Ahad Ha'Am and Bialik took Arlosoroff (called here "the Red suckling" and "the Red diplomat of Mapai") to task for sacrificing Jewish honor for the sake of money to Nazi coffers. This step, he went on, reflected the WZO leaders' decision to copy the pact of "Stalin their mentor" with the "most deranged antisemites – Hitler and Goering," and corroborated the accusation by Marx, "antisemitism's high priest," that Jews were prepared to sell everything. At a time when Jewish blood spilled onto German streets, and Communists filled German prisons and concentration camps, the *ha'avara* proposal by Labor's representative had no parallel for "ugliness and degradation" in the last century. It appeared, Pogrovinsky suggested, that Stalin had given approval to Arlosoroff, Ben-Gurion, and others of the Soviet dictator's Mapai "hasidim" to follow his footsteps. Jews in Eretz Israel and the world over would receive this "unforgiveable" agreement with "scorn and revulsion." Always knowing how to evaluate properly those who sold the honor of their people and their Torah, the writer concluded, the Jewish nation "will also know today how to respond to this villainy, which is being carried out in broad daylight and before the entire world."³⁵

Pogrovinsky and other Revisionists could not have known that Arlosoroff had long abandoned his earlier belief that Zionism could be fully implemented with British cooperation and Arab understanding. Telling Sima that he was preparing his political testament for the next ten years, Arlosoroff spent several nights during the spring of 1932 drafting ideas that crystallized in a lengthy, confidential letter to Weizmann on June 10 about his doubts and perplexities. Opting for a transitory period whereby "the organized revolutionary rule of a Jewish minority government" would "usurp the state machinery, the administration, and the military power" in Palestine, ideas that approached some of Jabotinsky's views, Arlosoroff favored a systematic policy of development, immigration, and settlement to be carried out during that time to insure the yishuv's future. Receiving no reply from Weizmann, he continued to press High Commissioner Wauchope for greater immigration, development of the Huleh area, Jewish settlement in Transjordan, and additional Jewish representation in the mandatory administration. Refusing to equate Revisionism with Fascism, unlike more militant colleagues in Mapai, he also sought some compromise in

the Histadrut-Betar Petah Tikva labor dispute.³⁶

Once Hitler gained total power at the end of March 1933, Arlosoroff assigned paramount importance to what he termed the "new and grave responsibility" posed by the crisis of Germany Jewry. He urged the non-committal Colonial Secretary, Sir Philip Cunliffe-Lister, to provide special entry for that Jewish community's workers and capitalists into Eretz Israel, and set out to attain "the liquidation of Jewish fortunes in Germany for transfer to Palestine." Traveling to Berlin, he secured official approval for arranging, in conjunction with the *Fuehrer's* National Socialist regime and the WZO, a gradual shift of Jewish funds abroad; *Juedische Rundschau* received permission to publish the full outline of Arlosoroff's scheme, including ten new school settlements in Palestine for children, a vocational reconstruction program there for youth, and a development corporation for adults to service thousands in industry and agriculture within a few years.³⁷

The "war of destruction against German Jewry," Arlosoroff proceeded to warn audiences across Europe, raised the question of the Jewish tragedy worldwide, and demanded a quick and vigorous response which, by necessity, would reveal a "radical change" regarding Zionism. A central apparatus had to be set up without delay in Palestine and in Germany, he informed a small group at the London home of WZO president Nahum Sokolow, with one or two Americans or Britishers dispatched to work out a plan of action with the Third Reich government. He also sought support from the Colonial Secretary for the transfer scheme, only to meet with Cunliffe-Lister's immediate, "markedly negative" response that British exports to Palestine would suffer thereby. On June 15, one day after he returned from Europe, a very depressed Arlosoroff insisted before Mapai's central committee that the *ha'avara* idea had to be implemented quickly; the world, he believed, was responsible for Jewry's fate. On Friday morning, the 16th, he saw a number of callers, met with Ussishkin regarding the removal of Arabs from Wadi Hawareth (Emek Hefer), and lunched with Wauchope. The two men then visited the village of Ben Shemen, where the German children's success in agriculture and farming obviously touched the High Commissioner. At 4 p.m. a car took Arlosoroff to his Tel Aviv home, from where he would go out with Sima for dinner nearby and then a walk on the beach.³⁸

A few hours before his murder, Arlosoroff sent a message to the WZO newspaper *HaOlam* in London, discussing the imminent Zionist Congress. With Jewry's plight growing like "an ever rising, engulfing wave," he noted, the events in Germany had again proven that "the Jewish question

is an urgent, international problem.” The movement needed a striking platform. “We dare not at this time degrade the Congress into an arena of unrestrained party obstinacy and unchecked rivalry,” the Executive’s political director stressed. Rather, those assembled should speak “nobly, clearly, and as one soul.” That same day, he posted a letter to the Labor office in Prague containing this proclamation: “The Congress had to be transformed into a mighty demonstration of our national existence without submission and of our uncompromising national will.... Eretz Israel must be the transmitter of the Jewish nation’s battles at the period of the greatest crisis in its life.”³⁹ Two months later, no longer privy to Arlosoroff’s wise counsel, the different factions which gathered in the capital of Czechoslovakia had to respond to the pressing challenge.

III

The eighteenth World Zionist Congress, where the Revisionists (to cite Jabotinsky’s apt recollection) were “pilloried as organically connected” with Arlosoroff’s assassination, signaled Labor’s decisive triumph. While Katznelson appealed for “cleansing the camp” of blood, Labor’s resolution that “the Party in which people who are being officially suspected of organizing the murder of one of our comrades grew up” should not sit on the presidium passed by a majority of two. No free discussion of the German Jewish crisis took place, with Jabotinsky only permitted to say that world Jewry had to “react with all means of just defense...against this attempt to destroy the Jewish people.” A commission would investigate “tendencies” which ran counter to “the fundamental principles of Jewish ethics” and endangered Zionism, having then the authority to “eradicate” from the movement any “elements” responsible. This innuendo, coupled with rumors (quickly proven false) that Ahimeir had confessed to the crime, ruled out Jabotinsky’s request that the Congress objectively investigate the alarming rise of party and class warfare in Palestine. Defeated, he sent a “triple Tel Hai” Betar salute to “innocent brothers” in prison Ahimeir, Stavsky, and Rosenblatt. Weizmann refused to attend the Congress, he told a Labor delegation, because he did not wish to “sit with killers”; Sokolow was re-elected, with Ben-Gurion and colleagues Kaplan and Moshe Shertok (later Sharett), as well as Gruenbaum, joining the Executive for the first time.⁴⁰

Undeterred, Katz pursued his own crusade for truth, increasingly

convinced that the Revisionists accused were innocent. A week before the Congress convened, two of his articles along these lines, previously published in *Moment*, saw print in Palestine under the title *Lo Ukhal L'Habashot (I Cannot Be Silent)*. No legal charges followed, and the pamphlet gained wide circulation. At the summer's end, Bialik, who believed that Jabotinsky's downfall at the Congress offered the reform of Zionism, expressed to Katz his "100 percent certainty" that Jews did not kill Arlosoroff. Confidentially, the poet added that a Hebrew school principal was told by Captain Alfred Riggs of the C.I.D. that the entire police investigation was "a bluff": the killing was a haphazard incident, not a political assassination.⁴¹

Unknown to Katz and Bialik, Inspector Tenenbaum resigned at that same moment from the police force after Rice refused to accept his conclusion that the three Revisionists had no connection with the murder. Tenenbaum's secret report failed to sway Meirov, Hos, and Golomb; Golomb quickly challenged Katz in *Davar*. That did not stop Sirkis from accusing Labor with mounting a blood libel, recalling what had occurred against Alfred Dreyfus and Sacco-Vanzetti, and instigating civil war at the Congress. Druyanov's articles continued in like vein, earning Klausner's private commendation.⁴²

A simultaneous police investigation of Ahimeir and twenty others for illegal activity via Brit HaBiryonom provided grist for Labor's mill. Police Captain Shitreet, relying mainly on Tenenbaum, made public a few papers seized from Ahimeir's desk which suggested a secret Revisionist underground bent on terrorism. *Davar* and *HaAretz* highlighted Ahimeir's essay *Megilat HaSikrikin (The Sicarii)*, dedicated to the memory of Charlotte Corday and Dora Kaplan, as the proof-text for his sanctioning murder on behalf of "communal objectives" that dramatically alter the course of history. Defenders replied that the draft consisted of private philosophical musings composed in 1926, including Ahimeir's having judged this phenomenon "a very dangerous disease," and that Brit HaBiryonom's public activities never embraced murder. Hardly persuaded, Labor publications noted excerpts from Ahimeir's diary for 1931 that spoke, for example, of "the amount of blood spilt as the measure of a great revolution or war," dismissing Ahimeir's entry of June 6, 1933, that he declined the plea of young followers to form "a secret revolutionary organization" because he wished to retire to a life of "cabinet quietness."⁴³

Jabotinsky remained steadfast, doing all in his power to strengthen the defense and his party's ranks. During the Congress, he had derided as a leftist provocation the rumors about Ahimeir's confession, and later publicly called its intervention in a matter *sub judice* "a crime." He obtained the necessary funds

to hire lawyer Samuel, to whom he subsequently sent detailed memoranda about numerous flaws in the prosecution's case. Supporting articles by Katz, Ravnitski, Druyanov and Smilansky, the last-named having heard from Tenenbaum and another police officer that the three accused were innocent, bolstered his hopes. Immediately after the Congress debacle, which included the departure from his party of its moderate wing, Jabotinsky declared that one million Jews had to be brought to Palestine without delay. The Revisionist Union, its new executive announced on October 18, would launch a worldwide petition movement and unite Jewry in a campaign against the Third Reich. That same month, in response to Britain's approving only 5,500 Palestinian entry certificates for the next six months, Betar issued a secret directive against accepting their share from this number even while negotiating with private employers outside of the labor schedule. The WZO, in turn, denounced these independent steps as breaches of Zionist discipline.⁴⁴

A seeming breakthrough in the Arlosoroff murder occurred in January 1934, when Abdul Medjid El-Kurdi, in prison for another murder charge, confessed to Rice and then to Shitreet that he and companion Issa Darwish were involved in killing the Jewish leader. Hearing of this startling news from the C.I.D.'s Riggs, Jewish police officer Shlomo Rosenstein had it transmitted to Samuel, who raised the issue in court. After members of the Arab Executive visited his cell, Abdul Medjid then claimed that Stavsky and Rosenblatt had offered him a substantial bribe to confess the murder. *BaMa'aleh* and broadsides printed on *Davar's* machinery immediately pounced on the "unclean and bloody" Revisionists, who vehemently denied the allegation. Samuel accused the police of manipulating Sima's testimony, and proposed that the killing was connected to an intended sexual attack on Mrs. Arlosoroff by the two Arabs, much as Arabs had raped a Jewish woman near the same spot and then killed her and her male companion in 1931. Mapai and the Histadrut, with Ben-Gurion at the helm, relied on the widow's testimony; Jabotinsky retorted at the end of February that while the Jewish "jackals" in Eretz Israel dreamt that Jews would be convicted, the "clams" of the yishuv permitted the intrigue, more brazen than the Dreyfus and Beilis cases, to go unchallenged.⁴⁵

Abdul Medjid's initial confessions sparked a dramatic turn in the prospects of the three men under investigation. From then on, a doubting Katznelson maintained silence even as his influence decreased within Mapai, and he made no effort to convene the inquiry commissioned by the recent Zionist Congress. Far more significantly, Shitreet conveyed the gist of what he had personally heard from Abdul Medjid to the Yishuv's Sephardi chief rabbi, Ya'akov Meir,

whose rabbinic court included Shitreet's father. Meir, in turn, would pass on the information to another sephardi Jew, a British district court magistrate in Jerusalem, Joseph Moshe Valero. Most important, the elderly Meir shared the particulars with his Ashkenazi counterpart, Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak Kook. Both agreed between themselves to vow never to divulge Shitreet's name so as not to damage his official standing with the mandatory administration.⁴⁶

Katz took heart, redoubling his efforts in public and in private. Publicity about the Arab prisoner's confessions convinced him that the charges against Stavsky, Rosenblatt, and Ahimeir would be dropped within a day or two. "I feel clearly with a writer's intuition that what Abdul Mejdid told is correct," Bialik also told Katz, who devoted much of his own newspaper *HaZeman* to questioning further the police's findings. Expressing confidence in British justice, he had concluded *Lo Ukhal L'Hahashot* a half year earlier with the suggestion that Kook and Sephardi Chief Rabbi Ben-Zion Uziel of Tel Aviv – Jaffa join two dignitaries of the yishuv's National Council to evaluate Rosenblatt's alibi. Katz's regular attempts to persuade Kook to intervene in light of the journalist's revelations failed, however. Kook always responded that he relied upon Mordekhai Eliash, his former student and an observant Jew, who had served for a time as one of the four Jewish Agency appointees on the legal team to represent Sima Arlosoroff.⁴⁷

Up to that point, Kook's years in Palestine since arriving from Latvia in 1904 had justly earned him the title "The High Priest of Rebirth." While seeking a renaissance of Orthodox Judaism, the leader attired in the traditional *shtreimel* fur hat and *kaftan* coat of Eastern Europe championed the nonreligious *halutzim* (agricultural pioneers) for contributing significantly to what he termed "the first stage of the final Redemption." His dignified appeal for Jewish eternal rights to the Western ("Wailing") Wall in Jerusalem after the Arab riots of 1929 greatly impressed the yishuv. Revisionists especially appreciated his hailing Jabotinsky as a "courageous, mighty spirit" after the latter was imprisoned in 1920 for defense activity against concerted Arab assaults; one decade later, Kook intervened to get Moshe Segal released from jail when the Betar member became the first to defy British law against blowing a *shofar* at the conclusion of Yom Kippur prayers alongside the Western Wall.⁴⁸

As regards the mandatory authorities, Kook maintained a respectful, if at times bold, attitude. Returning home from a forced stay in London during World War I, the Ashkenazi chief rabbi sent "the blessings of the Hebrew prophets" to King George V, adding his hope that London would "bring to

full fruition the glad tidings” announced in the Balfour Declaration. Privately, he lauded Betar’s unfurling of the Zionist flag at the Western Wall on Tisha B’Av 1929; his official statement, while expressing admiration that Jewish youth still possessed “sparks of the holy spirit of the Maccabees,” deprecated all demonstrations and thought that the issue could be settled amicably. He denounced the Passfield White Paper, declared settlement in Eretz Israel to be a Divine injunction equal to all other biblical commandments, and told Wauchope that “illegal immigrants” were actually “returning natives.” At the same time, he successfully objected to a planned excommunication of Hitler and the German government in mid-1933 with the use of Torah scrolls at the Western Wall. In his view, England’s law and Jewish sanctity could exist in tandem, and had to be maintained.⁴⁹

A faith in British justice and especially in Eliash explains Kook’s early response even to what Shitreet divulged to Meir, the entreaties of Rabbi Natan Milikovsky (Netanyahu) notwithstanding. Kook cherished Milikovsky, an outstanding Zionist preacher in Yiddish who had converted thousands across Siberia and Poland to the cause before and during World War I. Teaching at a school in Safed as of 1920, Milikovsky spent several months between 1924–1929 on lecture tours in England, Carpatho-Russia, and the United States on behalf of the Jewish National Fund and the Keren HaYesod before moving to Herzliya. Kook, who had strongly recommended Milikovsky for the fund-raising mission, especially admired the younger man’s deep love of Torah, of Jewry, and of large agricultural settlement in Palestine. When Milikovsky’s oldest of nine children, Ben-Zion, a Revisionist who edited the magazine *Betar* with Klausner, told him that he saw Ahimeir in Jerusalem on the evening of Arlosoroff’s murder, the father commenced his own investigation. He pressed Kook to intercede, but the chief rabbi preferred to wait for the court’s verdict. Ahimeir tried his own way, sending Kook a letter from Jaffa’s prison two weeks before the Purim holiday which implored him to follow Mordekhai’s warning to Queen Esther: “If you will be silent at this time, then will relief and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place....” No reply was received.⁵⁰

Kook’s doubts surfaced at a private meeting on the evening of March 13 in Tel Aviv. In tandem with the city’s chief rabbis Uziel and Shlomo Aronson, who had been the rabbi of Kiev during the Beilis trial, he called for a truce between the yishuv’s warring parties without arriving at judgment. Suprasky and educator David Yellin agreed, with Berlin and Uziel stressing the biblical injunction to save Jews. Dizengoff criticized the Histadrut’s monopoly and its discriminating against Revisionists vis-à-vis immigration certificates,

and suggested that the British government in London become involved. Druyanov found fault with the press polemics of both sides, and announced his conviction, echoed by Sirkis, that the three Revisionists were innocent. Bialik vehemently opposed Dizengoff's idea, doubted that anyone would have influence when all the combatants were "in Satan's hands," and agreed that the defense should be aided. The Stavsky matter and all cases involving Jews in "our national home" should be given to Jewish courts, Kook observed, a right that many countries had granted us in the past. It was finally decided that a proclamation should be issued against the rising political violence, and also to consider creating a committee to gather funds for the Stavsky-Rosenblatt-Ahimeir defense team.⁵¹

Milikovsky's tenacity at this point proved to be critical. In the course of a conversation with Yosef Katznelson, the latter bitinglly challenged his praise of Jewish ethics, noting that even Kook had done nothing about the court case against the Revisionists. Greatly troubled, Milikovsky went straight to Kook's home and opened a discussion that lasted for three hours. When a hesitant Kook raised the issue of Eliash's involvement, Milikovsky retorted that at the final judgment, Jewry would only ask why did Rav Kook keep silent? "You are responsible!" he exclaimed. Trying another tack, Milikovsky charged that Jews were worse than the Arabs, whose religious leaders spearheaded their political wars. He also noted the eminent Jews of past generations who had sacrificed their own lives to save the innocent. All to no avail.

Milikovsky then stood up, all atremble, white with fever, and shouted to Kook:

Please remember! In this city of Jerusalem, one innocent man was already hanged. And the Jewish people have paid for this with 1,800 years of servitude, tears, and blood. Do you wish to create in Jerusalem a new Jesus, to revive the crucified one from Nazereth?

Knitting his eyebrows, an agitated Kook asked for more explanations about the prosecution's charges. Milikovsky responded with a paragraph-by-paragraph analysis of Katz's *Lo Ukhal L'Hahashot*. Ultimately receiving the chief rabbi's approval to create a defense committee and his pledge to help with whatever Milikovsky requested, the overjoyed visitor set to the task with limitless fervor.⁵²

Kook took the lead from then on, much to the surprise of Katz, who

had recently wondered in an article if the silence of the rabbis up to that point reflected “the pursuit of peace or fear.” Now Katz heard him express to a small group the certainty “more than 100 percent” that the accused, whom Kook called “Prisoners of Zion,” were innocent. Direct reports about the accused from “Reb” Aryeh Levin, who visited the three men in jail every Sabbath morning, strengthened the chief rabbi’s resolve. On April 24, a public announcement, appearing in the first issue of Ben-Zion Netanyahu’s newspaper *HaYarden*, requested funds for the defense of “our imprisoned three brothers” on trial in Jerusalem. The signatories, among others, included Kook, Uziel, Aronson, Berlin, Yelin, Sirkis, Klausner, Smilansky, Milikovsky, and Suprasky. Another manifesto, including Dizengoff and Druyanov, called upon all factions in the yishuv to desist from political violence and civil war. Bialik’s name was conspicuously absent from both.⁵³

On May 16, the day that Ahimeir was acquitted of “conspiracy to murder,” the ailing Milikovsky sent Kook a hastily written message of “mazal tov,” and asked for action. Hailing the verdict as “a day of salvation from above,” the “eternally faithful student” advised Kook to write or cable a blessing to the freed man. Kook did so, his letter (thanks to Milikovsky’s advice) opening with the salutation “dear author.” When Ahimeir then began a hunger strike after being kept in jail for Brit HaBiryonim activity, Milikovsky prevailed upon Kook to beseech the greatly weakened prisoner to halt his four-day fast. Kook promptly followed up, assuring Ahimeir of his certainty that the mandatory would soon “recognize its obligation” to free him completely. A highly appreciative Ahimeir complied with the request, correspondence which *HaYarden* featured. Furious, all Labor newspapers, together with *HaAretz* and *HaOlam*, blasted the use of “our brothers” and particularly Kook’s resort to “dear author.” On the chief rabbi’s doorstep appeared the slogan: “Woe the nation whose priests [Kook was of the Jewish priestly class] defend murderers.” Although greatly distressed at these vindictive attacks, Kook declared that “dear author” was not, as HaPo’el HaMizrachi’s *Netivot* excused it, a “slip of the pen.”⁵⁴

The court’s final verdict on June 8, freeing Rosenblatt but sentencing Stavsky by a vote of 3-1 to death (Justice Valero the dissenting voice), threw Kook and his circle into unrelenting activity. The next evening, immediately when the Sabbath was over, Milikovsky, joined by son Ben-Zvi, Greenberg, Yosef Katznelson, Eliyahu Ben-Horin, and the lawyer Ya’akov Wainshal, decided with Kook that telegrams should be sent to Jewish communities abroad and to prominent individuals like the Archbishop of Canterbury.

A long proclamation to the yishuv was also drafted, Kook inserting the words "innocent and righteous" regarding Stavsky; aside from Kook, Meir, and Uziel (but not Aronson), thirteen other illustrious Torah sages would append their names ten days later. To avoid British censorship, Ben-Horin crossed the border to Beirut, from where he dispatched the signatories' *cri de coeur*. On June 19, the same day that Ahimeir was sentenced to twenty-one months' imprisonment with hard labor (his three Brit HaBiryonom co-defendants received lesser sentences), one hundred and ten leading yishuv citizens headed by Dizengoff issued a manifesto averring that "a terrible crime" had occurred against Stavsky, and expressing their belief that the truth would eventually emerge victorious.⁵⁵

Despite severe rebuke, including from the Palestine administration, Kook gave no quarter. Assailed by Labor, he issued more proclamations while an ill Milikovsky and Sirkis diligently canvassed signatures and funds for Stavsky's legal appeal. Standing before a new Torah scroll in his yeshiva, Kook uttered a special prayer for Stavsky's health; on another occasion, Katz heard him announce his readiness to take an oath on the eve of Yom Kippur in front of an opened Holy Ark that Stavsky was innocent. With his frame increasingly stooped and his eyes under a pale forehead reflecting great sadness, the chief rabbi appeared (in Bialik's characterization) "as if he himself stood in the shadow of the gallows."⁵⁶

His certainty assured once Eliash privately heard Abdul Medjid repeat on June 19 his initial confession, Kook firmly defended his activities. Thus did he retort during a stormy interview with Jerusalem district governor Major Campbell:

The Law of God permits trespass of God's commandments for the purpose of saving life.... How much more so are we permitted, for the saving of life, to trespass the law of the State, which is the law of man.... I have sufficient reason and sufficient information at my disposal to convince me beyond a shadow of doubt that Stavsky is wholly blameless and innocent.

In the end, Kook categorically refused Campbell's suggestion that he issue a "re-interpretation" of his public stance, no matter what official punishment might follow. A long letter to Wauchope for Stavsky's sake remained, at the same time, in his personal files.⁵⁷

Positive that Stavsky had committed the crime because of Revisionist

indoctrination, Ben-Gurion now contemplated some punitive action against Kook. At Mapai's central committee on June 13 he lashed out against *Do'ar HaYom*, *Hazit Ha'am*, and *HaYarden* – together with Kook – as “a small group of communal prostitutes (*sic!*) who hated workers, joined by some innocent individuals.” Those who educated Stavsky should be put in the dock and “destroyed,” he concluded, for they endangered the hope of the Jewish people and of Zionism. Two weeks later, Ben-Gurion proposed that the authority of the chief rabbinate's office should be abolished, Palestinian Jewry demanding of the mandatory that “we be freed of our binding obligation to this institution in matters of marriage, inheritance, etc.” Shertok advised that some of that office's jurisdiction be curtailed, while Yisrael Meriminski (later Merom) advocated the “nullification of religion” from the yishuv's body politic. Kaplan countered with a suggestion that action be taken against the rabbis without arousing the question of their authority, thereby “preventing a *kulturkampf*.” The final vote on the three resolutions stood as follows: 7 – Kaplan; 6 – Ben-Gurion; 1 – Meriminski.⁵⁸

The appeal court's unanimous verdict on July 20, freeing Stavsky due to the lack of evidence corroborating Sima's testimony while also noting that the conviction would have been upheld in England and much of the empire, provided ammunition both for the Right and for the Left. Praising British justice, Jabotinsky gave thanks to Samuel, Kook, Dizengoff, Katz, and others who had also toiled for the three accused; *Do'ar HaYom* asserted that the Jewish people sighed with relief because it was “washed clean of the grave accusation of murder within its midst.” Milikovsky reminded a jubilant victory celebration that the Zionist executive's hands were stained with blood, but truth had triumphed. *Davar's* lead editorial, on the other hand, stressed that Stavsky was “not innocent but unpunishable” only because Palestinian law required two reliable witnesses to convict; Mapai broadsides on Tel Aviv's streets quickly declared that Stavsky and Rosenblatt remained the murderers, and insisted that Arlosoroff's death would be avenged with war against “the party of the Biryonim.”⁵⁹

Furious upon hearing that Stavsky and Rosenblatt would receive the traditional special blessing after they were called to the Sabbath Torah reading in Tel Aviv's Great Synagogue the next morning, Yitzhak Ben-Aharon insisted, with Ben-Gurion's support, that Labor youth disrupt the service. A melee did, in fact, break out. After the police restored order, Stavsky and Rosenblatt walked home amidst throngs which shouted “Long live Chief Rabbi Kook!” and “Long live the truth!”⁶⁰

Fully aware that continued civil war could destroy the yishuv, some appealed for healing the breach between Jew and Jew in the Holy Land. Katz's new pamphlet *HaEmet Kodemet LaShalom* (*Truth Precedes Peace*) urged that only an objective inquiry could resolve the contentious issue. All who set highest the good of their people, opined the *Palestine Post*, must work for "a pure and constructive policy in upbuilding the Jewish National Home," repudiate violence, and scorn party hate. Years might pass before the truth of the murder emerged, *HaAretz* editorialized, but Palestine's Jews now had to devote their entire thoughts "to our internal cleansing," rearing for Arlosoroff a lighthouse of peace "to send its rays into the hostile shadows and the threatening decadence." Mizrachi's *HaTor*, a consistent critic of attacks against Kook, pleaded for a return to quiet lest the yishuv witness "a third destruction." *Do'ar HaYom* hoped that the court's decision would mark the end of "a long and threatening nightmare," and the beginning if not of complete unity, then at least an armistice.⁶¹ Given Labor's immediate response to the verdict, however, even this prudent wish appeared illusory.

IV

Milikovsky, never aligned with any party, made a first effort towards reconciling the opposing factions by meeting Berl Katznelson at the end of July. According to the Labor ideologue's later report to Mapai, his visitor at *Davar's* editorial office came from the "Revisionist-Farmer-Kook camp," which wished to invite Labor to discuss creating peace in the yishuv. Katznelson did not encourage the suggestion that Kook arbitrate a peace between Labor and the Revisionists. As for Milikovsky's idea that Kook mediate labor-employer difficulties, Katznelson observed that since the Ashkenazi chief rabbi's status in the Labor community had gone down as a result of his public activities during the trial's last four months, Kook should try his luck with the circles close to him. If he succeeded, then Labor would sign an agreement. At the same time, Katznelson expressed to his colleagues the anxiety that "making peace" had become their opponents' "primary maneuver" at the present juncture. Similar talks, the central committee heard further, had taken place between Ben-Gurion, Berlin, and members of the socialist-leaning HaPoel HaMizrachi.⁶²

While privately hailing Stavsky's release as "a sanctification of God's name and a removal of shame from Israel," Kook had actually retreated into silence

as regards Stavsky's escaping the hangman's noose. Indeed, his innermost thoughts after having heard Meir's confidential report from Shitreet about Abdul Medjid's confession would not surface for seventy-one years. Written as an untitled poem of twenty-four stanzas, Kook's biblically-rooted verses allude to the venomous attacks which he quietly suffered, reflected as each individual's swerving between the calm and the turbulence of life. "I am the man who has seen affliction," "savage men filled me with bitterness," and similar phrases are followed by "R[abbi] 'Ya'akov Meir' appeared as a blood avenger," "loosened the fetters of wickedness," and "delivered me from the netherworld beneath." Darkness can be replaced by light and "distress will not endure," the author writes, taking the trial's *dénouement* as a sign that everything can receive heavenly salvation. Publicly, Kook did reply on June 17 to a query from *HaHed* editor Yehoshua Radler-Feldman ("Rav Binyamin") of Mizrahi that while a personal search for the truth convinced him of Stavsky's innocence, he cherished all the contending factions for one reason: they contribute to "an everlasting building" that would be erected, thanks to Divine counsel, as the basis of Jewry's "full redemption."⁶³

The intervention of Milikovsky, termed by Ben-Gurion "Kook's right hand," once again stirred the chief rabbi to activity. Given a "boundless love" for all Jews, as he put it to Radler-Feldman, he encouraged Milikovsky to invite the Labor chief for a meeting at Kook's home. A skeptical Ben-Gurion told Milkovsky on August 29 that Kook could meet him at the Jewish Agency Executive's office in Jerusalem; Mapai's central committee concluded the next day that the Histadrut could dialogue over "Hebrew labor" – not peace. Kook received instead Katznelson and David Remez, who had met earlier with Ben-Horin, twice soon thereafter, then tried to convince the Farmers' Federation to hire Jewish workers. In the Mapai inner circle, Lufban, Aharonovitz, Tabenkin, and Pinhas Lubianker (later Lavon), deprecated any contact with Kook; Golda Meyerson (later Meir) and Zalman Rubashov (later Shazar) backed Remez and a bitter Katznelson. When the Histadrut's ruling body voted on October 21 to end talks with Kook, even after a vicious assault four days earlier by laborites against a Revisionist meeting in Haifa, Kook could do no more than issue a proclamation decrying "the desecration of the name of Heaven, of Jewry, of our holy land," and pleading for unity to halt the "despicable," "savage," and "irrational" civil war.⁶⁴

Labor's unbending attitude ultimately ruled out, as well, a compromise upon which Ben-Gurion and Jabotinsky reached tentative agreement that same autumn. The Revisionist World Executive's public offer on September 2

of immediate negotiations, halting physical violence without compromising on principles, had elicited no change in Ben-Gurion at first. In Mapai meetings he continued to vilify the Revisionists as “Nazis” and as a false messianic “Frankist” movement, characterizations echoed by his colleagues. Only the intercession of Pinhas Rutenberg brought Ben-Gurion and Jabotinsky secretly together; they signed a preliminary agreement on October 26 along the lines of the Revisionists’ September proposal. Yet, while most of Jabotinsky’s followers approved (Ahimeir and Menahem Begin of Poland’s Betar strongly in opposition), the Histadrut membership voted down the promising *modus vivendi* by an impressive majority in March 1935; the Revisionists officially seceded from the WZO one month later. That same year, Ben-Gurion rejected Jabotinsky’s plea for a round table conference.⁶⁵

The trial took a relentless toll both on Milikovsky and on Kook. Seven months after Stavsky’s release, Milikovsky died at the age of fifty-five. Despite severe weather, Kook came to eulogize his “precious” friend, whose heart was “filled with strength and life,” and whose “sublime effort” to save a Jew “in the days of wrath” was carried out with “such faith and dedication.” At the close of the initial thirty-day mourning period, he further lauded Milikovsky as an exceptional orator, dedicated to Torah, to the Jewish people, and to its national renaissance. That same month, Dizengoff and the Tel Aviv council voted (with Mapai representatives abstaining) to grant Kook honorary citizenship, eliciting his warm gratitude. Yet the emotional travail and the unceasing effort which he had endured during the trial greatly weakened his physical condition, as he was suffering from a cancer that was diagnosed after Stavsky’s acquittal. He passed away on September 1, 1935, at the age of seventy, his final words the traditional prayer “Hear O Israel, The Lord Our God, The Lord Is One!”⁶⁶

The Ashkenazi chief rabbi’s singular dedication to the accused Revisionists greatly impressed Jabotinsky, once called by Kook “a messenger of God.” Hitherto, as a member of the assimilated Russian-Jewish intelligentsia, the Revisionist had applauded secular Zionism’s declaration that the Jews constituted a nation and not a religious community, and the idea that state and religion should be separated. Jewry could only be rescued by descendants of the “secular zealots,” he wrote in 1923, not by the Diaspora-oriented Orthodox. He attacked the “obscurantist relics” of Jewish tradition; his novel *Samson* (1927) challenged the prohibition of intermarriage and hailed heroic Philistine nobility. Yet Kook’s “lofty example,” he wrote Milikovsky on June 26, 1934, prompted one to renew the title “high priest” and Jabotinsky to feel “for the first time” that Eretz Israel still had the merit of being called “holy.”

At the founding convention in September 1935 of his New Zionist Organization, the Revisionist leader had the constitutional preamble include among Zionism's tasks "the implementation of the sacredness of Torah." To the objections of his one child, Eri, he argued that "*we need religious pathos as such*"; his stress on the spiritual may also have been directed against the more radical views of Ahimeir and of the Revisionists' emerging Irgun Tsva'i Leumi military organization. Jabotinsky did not explore the issue further, however, for he died of a heart attack while visiting a Betar camp in upstate New York on August 3, 1940.⁶⁷

The Left's hostility toward the Right continued to fester, aborting any chance for unity between the opposing camps. In 1938, Ben-Gurion torpedoed a Hagana-Irgun agreement that had been ratified by Jabotinsky. Joint activity for "illegal" immigration to Palestine or providing aid to Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe once World War II broke out proved impossible. The same constraints operated in the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, where Betar fighters had to fight on their own once a leader like Mordekhai Tanenbaum-Tamaroff told his Dror comrades on June 6, 1942, that Labor had emerged victorious in the struggle following the murder of Arlosoroff by Jewish "fascist rabble." Leftist delegates in Istanbul, reported a representative of the General Zionists' youth movement in October 1944, excised all mention of resistance fighters from rival political parties when transmitting to Palestine letters received from Poland. Beginning that November, ten months after Irgun commander Begin had declared a revolt on February 1, 1944, against the mandatory power, Hagana Palmach members carried out a "*saison*" (or hunting season) against Irgun loyalists, incarcerating them or handing hundreds of names over to the British.⁶⁸

On June 20, 1948, Palmach units under Yitshak Rabin's command fired upon Irgunists and a huge shipment of weapons reaching Tel Aviv's beach via an American World War II LST dubbed the *Altalena*, after one of Jabotinsky's pen names. Prime Minister Ben-Gurion, giving the order that the ship be shelled, declared then and later that he suspected a *putsch* against the one-month-old State of Israel. Begin, who had boarded the vessel when it stopped earlier at Kfar Vitkin, and his future Herut party rejoined that the attack (including shots at Irgunists who swam away from the burning ship) represented a plot of revenge. Stavsky and nine others aboard died of their wounds not far from where Arlosoroff had been shot fifteen years earlier. Six other Irgun men and three Hagana soldiers were killed in subsequent clashes.⁶⁹

For Ahimeir, the trial took on an obsessive quality until his fatal heart attack in June 1962. Leaving prison in August 1935 after a British attempt to withdraw his Palestinian citizenship failed, the man Jabotinsky praised for “teaching us the truthful nationalism” and Klausner hailed as “the zealot of our generation” retreated to family life in Ramat Gan. The solitary soul contributed regularly to Revisionist newspapers before and after Israel’s rebirth, all the while, as he had written Jabotinsky, pondering the subject: “Jews, what have you done?” Hundreds of columns under the pseudonym “A. Shammai” or “Abba Sikra” assailed numerous enemies: Bialik; Berl Katznelson (to whom he had been especially close before deserting Labor); Radler-Feldman; the Soviet regime and its yishuv advocates; “Zionist liquidators” approving Palestine’s partition by the United Nations in November 1947; Labor’s selective writing of Zionist history.

Having been the first to declare war on what he labeled the mandatory “occupier” as “a foreign ruler,” followed by Brit HaBiryonim protests which decisively influenced the rise of the Irgun and then the Lohamei Herut Yisrael (LEHI, or Freedom Fighters of Israel) in 1940, Ahimeir viewed the *Altalena* tragedy as another leftist “blood libel” against the Right. He urged Shitreet, now heading the new state’s police department, to break his silence and begin a full investigation of Arlosoroff’s murder. Unsuccessful in this crusade, Ahimeir wrote his own account, and began to speculate that perhaps Labor stood behind Arlosoroff’s murder. In his last years, the timid scholar wrote articles on Russian literature and general history for the *Hebrew Encyclopedia*, edited by Ben-Zion Netanyahu. Throughout, Ben-Gurion did not permit “Voice of Israel” radio, then under the authority of the Prime Minister’s office, to interview the staunch Revisionist.⁷⁰

In this same period, Ben-Gurion’s government coalition kept the fighters of the Irgun and LEHI out of the national pantheon. The Service Law defined pre-State soldiers only as individuals who had served with the Hagana, thereby excluding those in the dissident Jewish resistance groups from receiving casualty compensation and mention in Yizkor books of the fallen. The twelve men (all associated with the Irgun and LEHI) who had been condemned to the gallows by the mandatory government were accorded no official monuments either, further victimized in this struggle for national memory. In response, Begin commissioned a special memorial book designed to resemble the State of Israel volume, and established an organization to commemorate and to aid Irgun and LEHI members.⁷¹

Revelations about the Arlosoroff trial kept public interest alive during

Israel's first two decades. On June 12, 1955, four years before his demise, Arazi revealed to an audience for the first time why he had concluded that Medjid and Darwish were Arlosoroff's killers; Katz promptly called, once again, for a new inquiry. Herut linked Arazi's remarks to the concurrent "Kastner Trial," in which a judge concluded that Mapai's Rudolf (Rezső) Kastner had collaborated with the Germans in the destruction of Hungarian Jewry. The following year, a novel by Margot Klausner publicized Eliash's formal record of his interview with Mejdide. A Knesset majority voted down Begin's plea for an investigation, however, Justice Minister Pinhas Rosen declaring on June 6, 1956, that Stavsky's official exoneration closed the issue. Avigur's reminiscences in 1964 about Arazi, taking issue with the latter's conclusion about Arlosoroff's death, led to a defamation suit in which Rosenblatt was awarded 3,000 Israeli pounds for damages and legal fees. Two years later, David Tidhar, who had first examined the case on behalf of the Hagana's Hos, asserted in his memoirs that the two Arabs were responsible, and that Golomb knew the Revisionists did not kill Arlosoroff.⁷²

Additional news stories surfaced occasionally in the 1970s. In May 1973, veteran investigator Shlomo Ben-Elkana asserted in *Davar* that no substance existed to the rumor that Germans had killed Arlosoroff at the order of Josef Goebbels, who sought revenge for his wife Magda's affair with the Jew long before her marriage to the Nazi propaganda chief. At the same time, Ben-Elkana indicated that a contact of his had interviewed Medjid in Trans-Jordan after the 1967 Six-Day War, and the Arab admitted his role in the murder. The following month, Tuvya Arazi released to *Ma'ariv* his brother's full report to Rice in 1933, prompting positive coverage for the first time of Klausner's book. Former Mapai activist and Hagana editor Eliezer Livneh soon disclosed that colleagues had refused Katznelson's sympathetic request (transmitted originally to Livneh from Ahimeir) in 1943 for an inquiry, as well as Shitreet's early conclusion that Stavsky and Rosenblatt were innocent, and he raised his voice for a new investigation. Prime Minister Golda Meir opposed the appeal. Nor did these accounts sway some within Mapai who had been much engaged in the trial: to their dying day, Ben-Gurion (1973), Sima Arlosoroff (1976), Avigur (1978), and Dov Joseph (1980) each believed that Stavsky and Rosenblatt had eluded proper retribution.⁷³

The forty-fifth anniversary of Arlosoroff's murder garnered scant attention. Responding to an article in the *Jerusalem Post*, lawyer Max Seligman noted that in July 1939 Medjid and Darwish had admitted to him their guilt. Intending to rob their victim, Medjid fired his revolver in "a thoughtless reflex

action." They withdrew their earlier 1934 confession, the pair went on, after a policeman had warned them that they might otherwise be sentenced to death; a C.I.D. officer later corroborated these facts to him. Seligman added that both Shitreet, who had publicly kissed Stavsky following the Revisionist's acquittal by the Court of Appeals, and Yehuda Arazi told him that they knew Stavsky was innocent. This letter to the editor elicited no response.⁷⁴

Shabtai Tevet's *Retsah Arlosoroff* (*The Murder of Arlosoroff*), published in early 1982, triggered a sea change. Focusing on the investigation as it unfolded, Ben-Gurion's biographer decided that the killers' identity could not be ascertained beyond doubt, nor had any evidence surfaced to vindicate charges made by some since that the British or the German authorities could serve as the *deus ex machina*. At the same time, the author came to three conclusions: only Stavsky did not "shake himself entirely" from the "widespread" suspicion that he killed Arlosoroff; "political circumstances" brought about Arlosoroff's death; the "wild language" of Ahimeir, Greenberg, and Yeivin (particularly in their editing of *Hazit HaAm*) made them "completely responsible" (*sic*) for waging a "one-sided battle" against Mapai and Arlosoroff, their "blind hatred" leading to subsequent developments. Whatever reservations historian Yaacov Shavit entertained, his review in *HaAretz* announced that Tevet's "conscientious, careful" work greatly justified those who thought that no need existed for a judicial inquiry after all these years: nothing more would have been gained and "the mystery would have remained."⁷⁵

On March 14, 1982, the cabinet of Likud Party head Prime Minister Begin, taking note of the controversy already swirling around Tevet's book (including a protest by Rosenblatt), decided that a state commission should investigate if Stavsky and/or Rosenblatt took part in Arlosoroff's death. Shavit himself had observed that the political Right and Left were both responsible for the volatile temper of the time, adding that a marked gap did exist between verbal violence and murder. Further, as Hanokh Ben-Yeroham noted in an expanded study that same year entitled *HaAlila HaGedola* for the Jabotinsky Institute, Tevet's presentation lacked historical context, including Ben-Gurion's active role in incitement against all opposition and Labor's physical attacks on Betar; it also resorted at times to conjecture, rhetorical questions, and psychological hypotheses of a dubious nature. Begin, a friend of Stavsky's from their Brest-Litovsk childhood, had already in 1935 praised Ahimeir as "a living and powerful legend for our young, fighting generation," and pledged soon after the older man's death that he would not rest until the entire truth would be officially revealed "in all its glory" for the sake of a nation whose

Bible exclaimed: "Justice, justice shall you pursue." Although having distanced Ahimeir from Herut's participation in the Israeli parliament, Begin now took the initiative to redeem a long-time promise.⁷⁶

More than three years passed before an inquiry commission submitted its final report. While Chief Justice Moshe Landau appointed former Supreme Court justice David Bekhor, Rabbi Dr. Eliezer Berkowitz, and Professor Yoav Gelber to the commission on April 25, Bekhor sought a delay until "the stormy atmosphere" in the country "settled down a bit." In mid-August, the Supreme Court gave the green light to proceed, but the army's entry and continuing war deep into Lebanon after the end of Operation Peace for the Galilee, and especially Begin's delay in convening an inquiry into the September massacre by Lebanese Christian militia forces in two Palestinian Arab refugee camps near Beirut, led to Gelber's resignation. Max Kennet, former president of the Tel Aviv – Jaffa district court, filled the vacant spot three months later. In February 1983, the committee called upon the public for testimony and began to undertake research under the directorship of Judge Alon Gilon. On June 4, 1985, almost two years after Begin resigned from office, the Bekhor Commission reached the unanimous conclusion that Rosenblatt and Stavsky "were not Haim Arlosoroff's killers and they did not abet the murder." In addition, the three members declared that all the evidence obtained did not enable them to determine who were the killers, or if the murder had been committed by any political party.⁷⁷

Finally, more than a jubilee after Arlosoroff's death, Begin felt vindicated. Years earlier he had recommended Margot Klausner's novel about Arlosoroff, much to Sima's dismay. Tevet's book had also stirred him to join Stavsky's sister in praising her brother and Ahimeir, as well as to pen a long, critical letter to Tevet about his volume, and particularly what Begin termed the "double injustice" committed therein against Stavsky and Ahimeir. From his Jerusalem home, the former Prime Minister now issued a personal statement expressing his grief that Ahimeir, Stavsky, and Rosenblatt did not live to witness this outcome, and sending his greetings to their families, to Jabotinsky's followers, and to world Jewry, who "all knew" that the accused were innocent and who sought to reveal the truth. "The subject was justice," he declared: "It has been done. It is a festival for the Jewish nation." Given the commission's serious determination of the "absolute innocence" of the accused "from a juridical and a moral point of view," he added to Ahimeir's highly grateful son Ya'akov, those who would "repeat their prattle" (against the Revisionists) did not have to be taken into consideration. At the twenty-fifth anniversary

of Ahimeir's death two years later, Begin cited Jabotinsky's acknowledgment of "our teacher and master" in a eulogy marked by unqualified praise.⁷⁸

Given the commission's findings, and particularly Israel's confrontation with the Palestinian-Arab *Intifada* uprising, the controversy scarcely kindled attention during the next decade. Ahimeir's younger son, Yosef (Yosi), devoted to publishing his father's political and literary oeuvre, realized that it would be "an illusion" to assume the Bekhor Commission report would convince everyone. Few took notice when a book suggested that both the British and the Arabs had an interest in "eliminating" Arlosoroff in order to frustrate his financial negotiations with Berlin, which might have led to a mass immigration of Jews to Palestine. A similar fate occurred to Shmuel Dotan's claim in 1991 that two Jewish Communists (not named) carried out the killing at the orders of Moscow, which worried about British imperialism in the region, and sought to stir Arab resentment against Arlosoroff's successful efforts to evacuate Bedouin from Wadi Hawareth.⁷⁹

The assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin by twenty-seven-year-old law student Yigal Amir on November 4, 1995, at the conclusion of a Tel Aviv rally in support of Israel's 1993 Oslo Accords with the Palestine Liberation Organization, brought "Arlosoroff" back to the fore. Labor and supporters on the Left linked Amir, of *yeshiva* and Bar-Ilan University background, to other right-wing opponents of Oslo's "land for peace" formula signed by Rabin and Yasser Arafat. Rabin's widow, Leah, compared the earlier incitement against her husband to that directed against Arlosoroff by the Revisionists and Biryonom before the night of June 16, 1933. On the Right side of the political spectrum, Likud and other parties could point to the subsequent Shamgar Commission's finding that Avishai Raviv of the government's security service, although knowing of Amir's hatred and expressed intentions regarding Rabin, engaged in prior incitement against Arabs and Rabin in order to gain credibility with rightist extremists, and did not pass on sufficient warning about Amir to the proper authorities. Further, Rabin himself had used inflammatory rhetoric in 1995 against settlers living beyond the pre-June 1967 "Green Line." As the new century dawned, Labor's Ofer Pines appealed for an official investigation of Likud parliamentary member Ariel Sharon on the charge that he asserted Labor "always incited," from the murder of Arlosoroff and the "*saison*" to the war in Lebanon and Rabin's death. Sharon responded that to ascribe any culpability for the killing of Rabin to the Likud was comparable to "the calumny heaped on the Revisionists back in 1933."⁸⁰

By the tenth anniversary of Rabin's death, any lingering interest in Arlosoroff's murder was coupled to the sharpening Left-Right divide within Israel's Jewish majority. New findings about the 1933 killing did not surface, including a German journalist's biography of Magda Goebbels, although one reviewer for Britain's leftist *New Statesman* took the opportunity to state that the killing of Arlosoroff "is usually attributed to the Jewish 'revisionists', the spiritual predecessors of Ariel Sharon." In June 2003, a Washington, D.C.-based attorney began a website called "The Arlosoroff Project," in which discussion of Israel's political scene arises regularly. A Bar-Ilan professor of Jewish history, commenting on instances of Jewish violence, casually replied to a *Jerusalem Report* questioner at the end of 2004 that "there have been cases of modern Jewish assassinations, as in Arlosoroff and Rabin, to give two examples." Israel's dovish Left continued to accuse the Right of fomenting an atmosphere of incitement that led to the Prime Minister's murder, and demonized the some 9,000 Jews living in Gush Katif and the northern Shomron prior to Israel's unilateral withdrawal from these areas (including the army's destruction of twenty-five Jewish settlements) in August 2005. And five years after the eruption of a Second *Intifada* during the fall of 2000, in the course of which more than 1,000 Israelis and 3,500 Palestinians lost their lives, CBS News reported that 80 percent of Israelis polled in a survey believed that another political assassination could occur.⁸¹

Little had been learned since Arlosoroff's fate began to bewitch the yishuv more than seventy years ago. His son Shaul persisted in blaming the Right; Yosef Ahimeir countered that two non-Revisionists in Akko prison heard Abdul Mejdid admit to them in 1938 that he and Issa Darwish had fatally assaulted Arlosoroff on the Tel Aviv beach. The country's first political assassination, the killing on June 30, 1924, of the strongly anti-Zionist Agudas Israel spokesman Yisrael Ya'akov de Haan by the Hagana's Tehomi, had elicited only Beilinson's public condemnation. Radically different was the response to the murder of Arlosoroff, since that fatality exacerbated the Left-Right struggle which had begun a few years earlier. Labor's faithful could not contemplate the possibility that Pogrovinsky's rejoinder on the morning of June 16, 1933, to steady incitement from Lufban and others entailed no death threat but an appeal for voting Revisionist before the eighteenth Zionist Congress. With a few later exceptions, pre-eminently Katznelson and Eliezer Yaffe, that party held firmly to the mantra of Revisionist guilt, whatever the evidence against a political killing. Their adversaries, on the other hand, always believed that a blood libel had been perpetrated against Revisionists for party gain.⁸²

Intemperate language by each side, often reflecting a mutual admiration for Lenin's use of force to achieve lofty goals, attributed treacherous and conspiratorial tactics to the other. David Yudelevitz (Idelovitch) privately bemoaned the internecine conflict sparked by "fires from Moscow" at the hands of "the Jewish Danton" Ben-Gurion against an innocent Stavsky; this apolitical pioneer of yishuv settlement and education concluded in June 1934 that the "extremism" of the Jew, "filled with poison and hatred," affected the Christian world adversely. Given this shrill climate, individuals like Katz, Sirkis, and Milikovsky failed in their overriding quest for domestic peace.⁸³

The final verdict settled nothing, however. Ben-Gurion did not accept British colleague Harry Sacher's warning that the refusal by Mapai to heed the appeal decision "is to strike a blow at the sanctity of the law." Following Valero's minority opinion, Jewish Agency officials saw to it that he lost his post on the British judiciary. In August 1958, Ben-Gurion even backed a cabinet vote (against Rosen's advice) not to transfer Jabotinsky's remains to the State of Israel. Ahimeir recanted his earlier pro-fascist views while noting the significant difference between Mussolini's stance in the 1920s and in the late 1930s, when British diplomacy drew the Italian dictator and Hitler together. His *mea culpa* in 1955 meant little to opponents, who recalled Ahimeir's dubbing Hebrew University chancellor Judah Magnes a "salon communist" for his bi-nationalist views, or his smearing the pre-state Zionist leadership as a Holocaust-type "*judenrat*." Moreover, as physicist-philosopher Yeshayahu Leibowitz wrote to Ya'akov Ahimeir, many of those same Labor leaders had adopted the Biryonim motto "with blood and fire" for the HaShomer defense organization in Palestine twenty years earlier, and long admired Stalin with fervor.⁸⁴

Arazi's lodestar radically differed. "I am a Jew belonging to the party of the Jewish people" replied the independent man simply to Ben-Gurion when refusing a government appointment in May 1948, this after more than a decade of pioneering activity for the Hagana in underground weapon purchase and *aliya bet* "illegal" immigration. The identical viewpoint explains Arazi's early departure from both the British police force and the Hagana in 1933 upon realizing that the accused Revisionists were not guilty. His non-political stance found a kindred echo in Kook's committed activity (markedly absent in Tevet's book) despite the vituperation personally suffered. As a basis for his own stand, the Ashkenazi chief rabbi could well have cited the biblical injunction that "innocent blood shall not be shed in the midst of your land," and then Isaiah's clarion call: "Zion shall be redeemed though justice, and her returnees through righteousness." Yet when Revisionist Yosef Klarman

thanked him for his efforts, he responded not by resort to sacred text, but in a very personal sense: "I saved Stavsky? I saved my own soul." Among his final expressed thoughts, Kook declared that no allowance existed for communal division among Jews, since "division was the foundation of apostasy."⁸⁵

Given the reality of schism which pervaded Jewish life in Eretz Israel, these related sentiments did not find a welcome audience. The few who sought an end to remorseless enmity, who wished to be a force for civility and reconciliation, gained few followers. Hope for unity between Left and Right soon proved a chimera after the ultimate court decision in July 1934; that condition, at times taking on Manichean overtones, persisted for years. The long shadow cast by the Arlosoroff tragedy lingers on,⁸⁶ the ghosts of that unresolved murder far from laid to rest.

Notes

- 1 Medzini to Jewish Agency London, June 17, 1933, S46/445, Central Zionist Archives (hereafter CZA), Jerusalem; Shabtai Tevet, *Retsah Arlosorov* (Tel Aviv, 1982), pp. 75-78; Tom Segev, "The Makings of History/Whodunit," *HaAretz*, June 29, 2008. In her very first report to a police officer at the hospital, Sima Arlosorov had also thought that Arabs were the killers. Tevet, *Retsah Arlosorov*, p. 80.
- 2 *Yediot Iriyat Tel Aviv*, 1933, 2:9 (Tel Aviv, 1933), pp. 301-302; *HaAretz*, June 18, 1933; *Davar*, June 18, 1933.
- 3 H. Ben-Yeroham, *HaAlila HaGedola, Lifnei Retsah Arlosorov U'LeAharav* (Tel Aviv, 1982), pp. 57, 24; Tevet, *Retsah Arlosorov*, p. 105; *Davar*, June 26, 1933.
- 4 *Davar*, July 7, 1933 (a Jewish Telegraphic Agency statement reprinted from *Moment*, June 21, 1933); Ze'ev Jabotinsky, *BaSa'ar* (Jerusalem, 1953), pp. 91-101. For Jabotinsky's taking the libel as a personal affront, see A. Remba, ed. *Shimshon Yunichman* (Tel Aviv, 1962), pp. 14-15, 197. Menahem Mendel Beilis (1874-1934) was the victim of a blood libel in Czarist Russia, charged with murdering a young Christian boy for Jewish ritual purposes. Worldwide protest ensued; a Russian jury acquitted the innocent man in 1913.
- 5 *Davar*, July 7, 1933.
- 6 Mapai Central Committee, June 20 and 29, 1933, Labor Archives, Bet Berl, Kfar Saba, Israel. Ahimeir's original family name was Haisinovits; he changed it to "brother of Meir" in memory of an older brother who died in the service of the Red

- Army during the Russian Revolution. His first name was an acrostic in Yiddish for Abraham son of Isaac.
- 7 Betar secretariat to Histadrut Va'ad HaPoel, June 21, 1933, file G-7/23/22, Israel State Archives (hereafter ISA), Jerusalem; Avigdor HaMeiri, "Ovdei HaSatan," *Turim*, June 29, 1933; Avraham Shlonsky, "Lo Tirtsah," *Turim*, July 28, 1933; Hanan Hever, *Moledet HaMavet Yafa: Estetika U'Politika B'Shirat Uri Zvi Greenberg* (Tel Aviv, 2004), p. 29; Ben-Yeroham, *HaAlila HaGedola*, pp. 48, 28-30.
 - 8 Medzini to Jewish Agency London, June 17, 1933, S46/445, CZA; Goldschmidt to Lulu, June 21, 1933, file G-7/23/22, ISA; Lipstuk to Jabotinsky, Aug. 17, 1933, Jabotinsky Archives (hereafter JA), Tel Aviv. The Communists quickly blamed "Zionist Fascists" for the murder, and specifically Stavsky of Jabotinsky's party, who "hates Arab nationalists and workers." Statement, June 23, 1933, A192/1103, CZA.
 - 9 *HaAretz*, June 23 and 26, 1933; Ben-Zion Katz, *Al Itonim V'Anashim* (Tel Aviv, 1983), pp. 157-158.
 - 10 Katz, *Al Itonim V'Anashim*, p. 157; *HaMatara*, June 30 and July 7, 1933; *Davar*, July 6 and 14, 1933; *Kings* I, 21:19. The *Evseksii* were the Jewish Sections in the Communist Party after the Bolshevik Revolution. Josephus Flavius abandoned the Jewish revolt in 67 C.E. to join the Roman enemy, and later authored an account of the rebellion in *The Jewish War*. Sanbalat was a satrap of Samaria who opposed Nehemiah and obstructed the rebuilding of Jerusalem after Cyrus of Persia had permitted Jews to return from the Babylonian exile to Eretz Israel (*Nehemiah*, chaps. 4, 6).
 - 11 Ben-Yeroham, *HaAlila HaGedola*, pp. 24, 36-42, 71-72; *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann*, 16, G. Sheffer, ed. (Jerusalem, 1978), pp. 3-4; *BaMa'aleh*, July 14, 1933.
 - 12 David Ben-Gurion, *Zikhronot* 1 (Tel Aviv, 1971), pp. 586-588, 645-647. The "philanthropic lords" referred to the equal representation given to wealthy non-Zionists in the enlarged Jewish Agency, an effort achieved by Weizmann in August 1929 in order to obtain urgently needed funding for the Zionist enterprise.
 - 13 *Palestine Post*, July 19, 1933; Ben-Gurion, *Zikhronot*, p. 644; Joseph Schechtman, *Fighter and Prophet: The Vladimir Jabotinsky Story, The Last Years* (New York, 1961), pp. 191-192.
 - 14 *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann*, 16, pp. 16-17. The Balfour Declaration, issued on November 2, 1917, declared that Great Britain would facilitate "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people" without prejudicing "the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews to any other country." The original document is in the British Museum, London.
 - 15 Tevet, *Retsah Arlosorov*, pp. 149-178, 185-186.
 - 16 Jabotinsky to Ya'akobi, July 24, 1933, JA; Ben-Yeroham, *HaAlila HaGedola*, pp. 89-90; Ze'ev Jabotinsky, *Mikhtavim* (Tel Aviv, n.d.), pp. 98-102. For Joseph's active role, see Ben-Yeroham, *HaAlila HaGedola*, pp. 77, 267, 277, 292, 313, 315, and note 35 below. Jabotinsky and the ex-Russian officer and Galilee pioneer Joseph

- Trumpeldor pressed for a Jewish Legion during World War I to join the Allies in an effort to liberate Palestine from Ottoman rule and, thereby, strengthen Zionist claims at the peace conference. Ultimately, the 38th, 39th, and 40th Battalions of Royal Fusiliers under British command, made up of Jewish volunteers from abroad, were consolidated into the "First Judean Regiment." After a successful campaign, the wary British disbanded the regiment.
- 17 Tevet, *Rezah Arlosorov*, pp. 123-127; Tehomi statement, Apr. 1978, file 5/3/232-P, JA; Sadan's 1968 letter to Shlomo Grodzinski (file 26-713/1, Genazim Archives, Tel Aviv), briefly noted by Anita Shapira, *Berl, Biografia*, 2 (Tel Aviv, 1981), p. 741, 112n, is quoted extensively by Yosef Ahimeir in *B'Ikvot Ne'elamim, LeParashat Arlosorov*, A. Bekher, ed. (Tel Aviv, 1989), pp. 24-25.
 - 18 *Davar*, July 1933; *Do'ar HaYom*, July 10, 1933; Aug. 4, 25, and 30, 1933; *Davar*, Sept. 15, 1933; *Do'ar HaYom*, Oct. 8, 1933. For the Hebrew novelist Yehuda Burla's attack on Ravnitski, see *Davar*, Aug. 17, 1933.
 - 19 Teveth, *Rezah Arlosorov*, pp. 150-154, 158-160; *Davar*, Aug. 16, 1933; Benkover to Mapai Central Committee, Aug. 10, 1933, A116/64, CZA.
 - 20 Va'ad HaPoel meetings, Aug. 17-22, 1933, Z4/287, CZA; Wise to Jabotinsky, Oct. 29, 1934, file 22/3/1-A, JA.
 - 21 Ze'ev Tzohar, "The Struggle Between the Revisionist Party and the Labor Movement – 1929-1933," *Modern Judaism* 8 (Feb. 1988), 16; Shabtai Tevet, *Kin'at David*, 2 (Jerusalem, 1980), *passim*; *HaPo'el HaTsa'ir*, Apr. 18, 1924; *Kuntres*, Aug. 11 and 21, 1925; Sept. 24, 1925; Oct. 2, 1925; Shapira, *Berl*, 2, p. 392.
 - 22 Tzohar, "The Struggle," 16; Jabotinsky, *BaSa'ar*, pp. 23-29, 33-42; Ya'akov Goldstein, *B'Derekh L'Hegmonia, Mapai – Hitgabshut Mediniyuta (1930-1936)* (Tel Aviv, 1980), pp. 173, 176.
 - 23 Tzohar, "The Struggle," 15-16.
 - 24 Jabotinsky, *BaSa'ar*, pp. 57-62, 65-68, 71-74; Goldstein, *B'Derekh L'Hegmonia*, pp. 177-280, 169.
 - 25 Yosef Heller, "HaMonism Shel HaMatara' O 'HaMonism Shel HaEmtsa'im'?: HaMakhloket HaRa'ayonit V'HaPolitit Bein Ze'ev Jabotinsky L'Vein Abba Ahimeir, 1928-1933," *Zion*, 52 (1987), 318-324; Abba Ahimeir, "Im En Ani Li Mi Li," *HaAretz*, Nov. 15, 1927; Abba Ahimeir, "MiPinkaso Shel Fashistan," *Do'ar HaYom*, Oct. 28, 1928; Abba Ahimeir, "HaDiktatura HeLeumit BaOlam HaGadol," *Do'ar HaYom*, Jan. 29, 1929; Shaw cited in *Do'ar HaYom*, Feb. 22, 1928; John P. Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism: The View From America* (Princeton, 1972). For Greenberg and Yeivin, see Yosef Ahimeir and Shmuel Shatski, eds., *Hinenu Sikrikim* (Tel Aviv, 1978), pp. 33-54.
 - 26 Heller, "HaMonism'," 328-329, 337-339; Uri Zvi Greenberg, "HaTsiyonut HaArtila'it V'HaMekonenim B'Shuleha," *HaOlam*, July 27, 1923; Uri Zvi Greenberg, *Hazon Ehad HaLigyonot* (Tel Aviv, 1928); Norman Rose, *Chaim Weizmann, A Biography* (New York, 1989 ed.), pp. 288-289; *Do'ar HaYom*, Oct. 10, 1930; Binyamin Zeroni, *Gaon V'Nadiv V'Akhzar* (Tel Aviv, 1992), pp. 19-21. For Yeivin's early stance, see *Do'ar HaYom*, Jan. 20, 27, 1929; Mar. 25, 28, 1929; Apr. 9, 19, and 21, 1939. Sarah Aaronsohn (1890-1917), a leader in the band called

- NILI (an acrostic for the biblical phrase "Netsah Yisrael Lo Yeshaker," *Samuel I*, 15:29) that provided key intelligence information to the British in their campaign to capture Palestine during World War I, committed suicide to escape further torture by her Turkish captors. Joseph Trumpeldor (1880-1920), an ex-Russian officer and Palestinian *halutz*, died during the defense of Tel Hai against Arab attack. Shalom Schwartzbard (1886-1938) was acquitted after assassinating in 1926 Semen Petlyura, the Ukrainian leader largely responsible for the murder of thousands of Jews in pogroms after World War I.
- 27 Abba Ahimeir, *Brit HaBiryoni* (Tel Aviv, 1972), *passim*; Heller, "HaMonism," 334-335, 339-342.
 - 28 Rose, *Chaim Weizmann*, pp. 291-293; Schechtman, *Fighter and Prophet*, pp. 147-154; Emanuel Neumann, *In the Arena, An Autobiographical Memoir* (New York, 1976), pp. 100-102. Given Arlosoroff's following the political line of Weizmann thereafter, Palestine's Revisionists began calling him "Haim the Second." Abba Ahimeir, "Pegishot Im Arlosorov," *Herut*, Jan. 15, 1965.
 - 29 Heller, "HaMonism," 345-351; Ahimeir and Shatski, *Hinenu Sikrikim*, pp. 20-22; A255/834, CZA. Ahimeir wanted the name "Agudat SA" (the Sarah Aaronsohn Group), but Greenberg insisted on Brit HaBiryoni. Yosi Ahimeir lecture, Hebrew University Conference, May 17, 2006, Jerusalem.
 - 30 Schechtman, *Fighter and Prophet*, pp. 160-162; Heller, "HaMonism," 352-261. The *sans-culottes* (those who did not wear the knee breeches of the middle and upper classes) were workers who demanded direct democracy and other militant reforms during the period of the National Convention (1792-1795) in the French Revolution. For excerpts of Yeivin's earlier letter to Jabotinsky, n.d., see file V243/2, Histadrut Archives, Makhon Lavon, Tel Aviv, Israel.
 - 31 *HaAretz*, Mar. 26, 1938, and *passim*; Anita Shapira, "HaVikuah B'Tokh Mapai Al HaShimush B'Alimut, 1932-1935," *HaTsiyonut* 5 (1978), 144-147; *Goldstein*, *B'Derekh L'Hegmonia*, p. 172; Jabotinsky, *BaSa'ar*, pp. 45-53.
 - 32 Ben-Gurion, *Zikhronot*, p. 563; *Davar*, Feb. 18, 1933; David Ben-Gurion, *Tenuat HaPoalim V'HaRevisionistim* (Tel Aviv, 1933); Ben-Yeroham, *HaAlila HaGedola*, pp. 232-234, 250; Shapira, "HaVikuah," 148-155. For the Tel Aviv council's conclusion that the assault on Passover stemmed from political incitement, see file 1/2-A/8H, JA. For the protest of the city's chief rabbis over that attack, see *Mikhmanei Uziel*, S. Katz and E. Barnea, eds., 5 (Jerusalem, 2007), p. 263.
 - 33 Schechtman, *Fighter and Prophet*, pp. 214-217; Ahimeir diary, June 2, 1933, file 69-P22/3, ISA.
 - 34 *Hazit HaAm*, Jan. 9, 1932; Feb. 23, 1932; June 14, 1932; July 12, 1932; Nov. 18, 1932; Apr. 21, 1933; June 3 and 9, 1933. The Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Muhammad Amin al-Husseini, together with his cousin Jamal al-Husseini, incited numerous Palestinian Arab attacks against Jews. SD referred to the Social Democratic Party in Germany. Greenberg had brought the pun "uncircumcised rabbi" into the Revisionist press in Poland. Ahimeir diary, Mar.-Apr. 1931, file 69-P22/3, ISA. For a recent analysis of Jewry's split regarding the *ha'avara*, see Yifat Weiss, "The Transfer Agreement and The Boycott Movement: A Jewish Dilemma on the Eve of

- the Holocaust," *Yad Vashem Studies* 26 (1998), pp. 129-171.
- 35 *Hazit Ha'Am*, June 16, 1933. Pogrovinsky subsequently heard from Jaffa district police commander Euan William Lucie-Smith that a translation of the article into English had been prepared for the prosecution in the office of Bernard Joseph, then serving as the Jewish Agency's legal liason with the British, with the highly significant addition of the word "physically" inserted after the original Hebrew "how to respond". Abba Ahimeir, *HaMisphat* (Tel Aviv, 1968), pp. 85-86. Joseph worked on the case for a year. See memorandum, October 30, 1934, file P10/772, ISA. Following the trial, he became legal advisor to the Agency's political department.
 - 36 Sima Arlosoroff report, n.d., 30.10, file G8007/6, ISA; Haim Arlosorov, *Yoman Yerushalayim* (Tel- Aviv, 1949) pp. 333-240; Arlosoroff-Wauchope interview, Mar. 23, 1933, A44/37, CZA; Arlosoroff-Wauchope interview, Apr. 14, 1933, L9/339, CZA; Goldstein, *B'Derekh L'Hegemonia*, pp. 171-172; Shapira, "HaVikuah," 151. It has been asserted that Arlosoroff was also criticized by some Arabs and Jews for supporting bi-nationalism via an agreement with Transjordan's King Abdullah (Edwin Black, *The Transfer Agreement* (New York, 1984), pp. 144-148). The unsuccessful negotiations for Jewish settlement in Transjordan, having no connection whatsoever to a bi-nationalist Palestine, were actually begun and carried out by the American Zionist Emanuel Neumann. A surprised Arlosoroff then supported the effort, and arranged a luncheon at Jerusalem's King David hotel on April 8, 1933, featuring Weizmann, five Transjordanian sheiks, Neumann, and others in attendance. Neumann, *In the Arena*, pp. 121-130.
 - 37 Arlosoroff-Colonial Secretary interview, Apr. 12, 1933, L9/338, CZA; Arlosoroff at Jewish Agency executive, London, May 8, 1933, Z4/302/29B, CZA; *New Judea*, July-Aug. 1933, 170-172.
 - 38 *HaPo'el HaTsa'ir*, June 23, 1933; meeting, June 1, 1933, A145/203, CZA; S.B. (Brodetsky) memorandum, June 1, 1933 meeting, S25/9706, CZA; Haim Shorer, "Arlosorov," *Davar*, Aug. 5, 1966; ? to Klausner, Apr. 4, 1949, A493/99, CZA; Medzini to Jewish Agency executive London, June 17, 1933, S46/445, CZA.
 - 39 *Palestine Post*, July 6, 1933; Shorer, "Arlosorov," *Davar*, Aug. 5, 1966.
 - 40 Schechtman, *Fighter and Prophet*, 192-196; *Davar*, Sept. 1, 1933; L9/93, CZA; Aharonovitz letter, Aug. 24, 1933, A116/64, CZA; Weizmann to Hexter, Aug. 23, 1933, Weizmann Archives, Rehovot, Israel. Shertok, who assumed Arlosoroff's post, personally felt that his predecessor's death left in its wake a "dark abyss" and an "unforeseeable future." Shertok to Sima Arlosoroff, Aug. 12, 1933, A44/39, CZA. An official British observer at the Congress emphasized that "mutual recrimination" prevented serious discussion of practical problems; American Zionist leader Stephen Wise found Labor "exploiting" the Arlosoroff murder "in order to destroy Revisionism," with the Revisionists "hopelessly resolved to carry on the fight." Gurney to Simon, Sept. 21, 1933, Foreign Office 371/16927, Public Record Office (PRO), Kew, England; Wise to Mack, Aug. 30, 1933, Box 115, Stephen Wise MSS., American Jewish Historical Society, Center for Jewish History, New York City.

- 41 Ben-Zion Katz, *Lo Ukhal L'HaHasbot* (Tel Aviv, 1933); Katz, *Al Itonim V'Anashim*, pp. 159-160; David Tidhar, *BeSheirut HaMoledet* (Tel Aviv, 1966), p. 423. Three years later, the C.I.D.'s Assistant Inspector-General confirmed Riggs's confidential disclosure about the three accused Revisionists, writing in his published memoir: "We knew perfectly well that none of these men had been implicated in the crime." The voluminous depositions, he added, were inspected by Charles Leach of Scotland Yard, and his final report would be "a tremendous asset" to the defense." Joseph F. Broadhurst, *From Vine Street to Jerusalem* (London, 1936), p. 236.
- 42 Tevet, *Retsah Arlosorov*, pp. 178-190; *Davar*, Sept. 14, 1933; *HaYesod*, Sept. 1933; Klausner to Druyanov, Oct. 3, 1933, A10/27/3, CZA. The Italian-born philosophical anarchists Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti were electrocuted in 1927 after a seven-year court case on the false charge that they had murdered a paymaster in Massachusetts.
- 43 *Davar* and *HaAretz*, Sept. 9, 1933; Ben-Yeroham, *HaAlila HaGedola*, pp. 200-205; Heller, "HaMonism'," 321-322; Ahimeir diary, Mar.-Apr. 1931, and May 24, 1931, file 69-P22/3, ISA; Ahimeir diary, June 10, 1933, file 30.10, P-772/10, ISA. Challenging Glikson's argument earlier that no distinction ought to be made between private and public murder, Ahimeir had pointed to Schwartzbard's killing of pogromist Petlyura as a positive act. *Do'ar HaYom*, Nov. 4, 1928. The *sicari*, carrying short daggers, killed Jewish leaders who openly cooperated with the Roman enemy. Charlotte Corday murdered the Jacobin journalist Jean Paul Marat in 1793, while Dora Kaplan wounded Lenin in 1918.
- 44 Schechtman, *Fighter and Prophet*, pp. 196-197, 211-213; Makhon Jabotinsky, *Pirsumim 2* (Tel Aviv, Oct., 1955); Moshe Smilansky, *Tekufa V'Shoa* (Tel Aviv, 1953), pp. 122-126; *Davar*, Sept. 10, 1933; *Din V'Heshbon HaExecutiva* (London, 1935), pp. 34-35; Brodetsky letter, Jan. 16, 1934, A45/24, CZA.
- 45 *World Jewry*, July 6, 1934; Rosenstein-Y. Ahimeir interview, Apr. 29, 1973, file P-7126/2, ISA; *BaMa'aleh*, Jan. 31, 1934; *BaSha'ar*, Jan. 27, 1934; *Mishpatim*, Jan. 30, 1934; both in F30/256, CZA; *HaAretz*, Nov. 15 and 16, 1931; Jabotinsky to Yeivin, Feb. 21, 1934, letters file 1/24/2/1A, JA; Schechtman, *Fighter and Prophet*, p. 200. Samuel had been denied access to the police investigations, including that of Medjid. Samuel to Attorney General, Feb. 4, 1934, file 703/23M, ISA. Asked by an Arab why he had denied his confession afterwards if it was true, Madjid replied: "What can I do? They want it so – let it be so." Atieh statement, July 2, 1934, file 30.10, 8007/9G, ISA. For Jabotinsky's memorandum about the trial, see Aide-Memoire, May 1934, A330/40, CZA.
- 46 Shapira, *Berl*, 2, pp. 408-27; Ben-Zion Katz, "Hakirat Retsah Arlosorov – Perek ShehTsarikh L'Saimo," *HaBoker*, June 24, 1955. Shitreet hinted at his secret activity, after hearing Medjid's confession, during a conversation with the jailed Ahimeir in which Shitreet confided that he was convinced of Stavsky's innocence. Ahimeir published his recollection of their talk in an open communication to Shitreet fourteen years later, hoping that the latter would press for a thorough investigation. Nothing followed as a result, but Shitreet did not deny in public the gist of their talk. Ahimeir, *HaMishpat*, pp. 242-246.

- 47 Katz, *Al Itonim V'Anashim*, pp. 160-161; *HaZeman*, Feb. 25, 1934; Ben-Zion Katz, "Al Nezayef Et HaHistoria," *HaBoker*, Sept. 9, 1950. At this early stage of the trial, Kook informed his yeshiva student Haim Cohen, later Chief Justice of the Israeli Supreme Court, that he did not think a Jew had it in his soul to commit such a murder. *Yerushalayim*, Mar. 3, 1989. For Kook's early regard for Eliash, see *Igrot HaRa'aya*, 3 (Jerusalem, 1985), pp. 248, 308.
- 48 Jacob Agus, *High Priest of Rebirth* (New York, 1946); Zvi Yaron, *Mishnato Shel HaRav Kook* (Jerusalem, 1975); Tsvi Zinger, "HaSovlanut B'Mishnato Shel HaRav Kook," *Molad* 5-6 (Apr.-May 1968), 665-686; *Do'ar HaYom*, June 10, 1931; L59/72, CZA; *HaTsofeh*, Jan. 8, 1965; Moshe Segal, *Dor VaDor* (Jerusalem, 1985), pp. 91-93. Blowing the *shofar* (ram's horn) signals the end of the Yom Kippur service.
- 49 Kook message, Sept. 11, 1919, L4/930, CZA; *Lekutei HaRa'aya*, 2, M. Z. Nerya, ed. (Jerusalem, 1991), p. 368; Kook statement on Aug. 18, 1929 interview, L59/71, CZA; *Lekutei HaRa'aya*, 1, M. Z. Nerya, ed. (Tel Aviv, 1990), pp. 259-60; Kook declaration on the 1930 White Paper, file P-193, JA; Kook to Fishman (Maimon), Dec. 12, 1933, Yehuda Maimon MSS., Mosad HaRav Kook, Jerusalem; *Lekutei HaRa'aya*, M. Z. Nerya, ed. (Tel Aviv, 1995), pp. 115-116; Yitshak Orenstein, *Yoman HaKotel HaMa'aravi* (Jerusalem, 1968), p. 63. Tisha B'Av marks the traditional Jewish fast for the destruction of the two Holy Temples in Jerusalem by the Babylonians (586 B.C.E.) and the Romans (70 C.E.).
- 50 B.K., *HaAretz*, July 3, 1935; David Tidhar, *Encyclopedia L'Halutsei HaYishuv*, 1 (Tel Aviv, 1947), pp. 186-187; Kook letter, Jan. 30, 1924, KKL 5/728, CZA; Shalom Ra'an'an Kook reminiscences, n.d., file P-193, JA; Ben-Zion Netanyahu interview with the author, Aug. 7, 2004; Ahimeir, *HaMishpat*, pp. 146-147, 228-229; *Megilat Esther*, 4:14. Milikovsky's powerful speeches in Yiddish can be sampled in his *Folk un Land* (New York, 1928), later translated in Hebrew as *Am U'Medina* (Tel Aviv, 1994).
- 51 Meeting of Mar. 13, 1934, file 8/311, Tel Aviv Archives, Tel Aviv. For the biblical injunction to save Jews, see *Numbers* 35:25. For Dizengoff's early criticism of the Histadrut's monopoly, see the meeting of Aug. 4, 1925, file 7(6)-12, Tel Aviv Archives.
- 52 Yosef Ahimeir, ed. *HaNasikh HaShahor* (Tel Aviv, 1983), pp. 35-36; Shalom Ra'an'an Kook reminiscences, n.d., file P-193, JA; Netanyahu to Klausner, Feb. 6, 1935, file 4-1086/396, Joseph Klausner Archives, Jewish National Library, Jerusalem. Milkovsky's son was also present at this meeting. Ben-Zion Netanyahu interview with the author, Aug. 7, 2004.
- 53 Ben-Zion Katz, "Redifat Shalom O Pahdanut?" *Hed HaZeman*, Apr. 1, 1934; Ben-Zion Katz, "Ma'aseh ShehLo Ye'aseh," *Hadasot*, July 16, 1939; Ahimeir, *HaMishpat*, pp. 153, 180; *HaYarden*, Apr. 24, 1934; *HaHed*, May 1934. For Levin's intercession, a few years after Stavsky's death, which enabled Stavsky's childless widow to remarry without a levirate marriage according to Jewish religious law, see Simha Raz, *Shiv'im Panim LaTorah: Devarim* (Jerusalem, 2002 ed.), pp. 181-182.
- 54 Shalom Ra'an'an Kook reminiscences, n.d., file P-193, JA; Milikovsky to Kook,

- n.d., and Kook to Ahimeir, May 17, 1934, Abba Ahimeir Archives, Ramat Gan, Israel (courtesy of Yosef Ahimeir); *Davar*, May 26, 1934, and June 9 and 10, 1934; *BaMa'aleh*, May 1, 1934, and June 5, 1934; *HaPo'el HaTsa'ir*, May 25, 1934; file H-1/35/8, JA; *HaOlam*, June 7, 1934; Shmuel Avidor, *HaIsh K'Neged HaZerem* (Jerusalem, 1962), p. 279; *Netivot*, June 1934. For Ahimeir's heartfelt response to Kook's personal appeal, see Ahimeir, *HaMishpat*, p. 235.
- 55 Valero's statement, A330/38, CZA; Court sentences, June 19, 1934, CO 733/278/75146/2, PRO; Avidor, *HaIsh K'Neged HaZerem*, p. 277; Netanyahu interview with the author, Aug. 7, 2004; proclamations, files P-193 and 5/8-H; both in JA. Greenberg described his caustic feelings about the trial, and specifically the leftist attacks upon him after he returned to Eretz Israel, in the poem "Shnatayim VaHetsi HaYiti Goleh." See Hever, *Moledet HaMavet Yafah*, pp. 9-11. For Uziel's thoughts, see his letter to Margalit, June 21, 1934, file 38/8-H, JA.
 - 56 *Davar* editorial, June 10, 1934; *HaPo'el HaTsa'ir*, June 15 and 22, 1934; broadsides, in files 1/35/8-H; 58-H; 40/8-H; all in JA; A340/21, CZA; Ben-Zion Katz, "Kit'ei Reshamim V'Zikhronot" (1936), file 193-P, JA; Avidor, *HaIsh K'Neged HaZerem*, p. 279.
 - 57 Eliash statement, June 25, 1934, A493/99, CZA; *HaHed*, June and July 1934; *World Jewry*, July 6, 1934; Jacobi to Jabotinsky, June 12, 1934; Abrahamov to Jabotinsky-Jacobi, July 5, 1934; both in file 22/3/1-A, JA; Kook to High Commissioner (marked "not sent"), June 29, 1934, A340/21, CZA. For Kook's draft statement that the proclamation did not intend to embarrass the court, see n.d., A340/21, CZA; also see Kook to Campbell, July 2, 1934, A340/21, CZA.
 - 58 Mapai Central Committee, June 13 and 27, 1934, Bet Berl. Four days later, by a vote of four (Ben-Gurion, Shertok, Gruenbaum, and Maurice Hexter) to two (A. Berkson and Werner Senator), the Jewish Agency Executive turned down a suggestion from Berl Locker in London, interested in "calming the waters," that the Executive issue a statement supporting clemency for Stavsky. Jewish Agency Executive, July 1, 1934, CZA. Also see Beilinson's critical essay, "Limno'a Tishtush," against Kook's intervention. *Davar*, July 2, 1934.
 - 59 Schechtman, *Fighter and Prophet*, pp. 202-203; *Palestine Post*, July 22 and 23, 1943; *HaYarden*, July 25, 1934; *Davar*, July 20 and 22, 1934; Mapai manifesto, July 20, 1934, file 1/35/8-H, JA. Palestine's Attorney General declared to the Colonial Office's chief legal advisor: "Politically, the result may be satisfactory but from a legal point of view nothing could be more unsatisfactory." Trusted to Bushe, Aug. 9, 1934, Colonial Office (hereafter CO) 733/266/37524/II, PRO. Confessing to the Mandate's Senior Government Advocate, an Arab, that he was greatly surprised at the verdict, the Jewish Agency's Bernard Joseph observed that the Court of Appeals had confirmed judgments before this on less corroborative evidence. "I know from Rice," he concluded, "that you put up a splendid show, and I suppose the result was just Stavsky's good luck." Joseph to al-Alami, Sept. 12, 1934, file 30.10, 8007/9G, ISA. "Many thanks for your kind letter" was the reply. Al-Alami to Joseph, September 16, 1934, file P10/772, ISA.
 - 60 Mapai Central Committee, July 20, 1934, Bet Berl.

- 61 Ben-Zion Katz, *HaEmet Kodemet LaShalom* (Jerusalem, 1934); newspapers quoted in the *Palestine Post*, July 22 and 23, 1934; *HaTor*, July 27, 1934.
- 62 Mapai Central Committee, July 28, 1934; Aug. 30, 1934; both in Bet Berl; Ben-Zion Netanyahu interview with the author, Aug. 7, 2004.
- 63 Avidor, *HaIsh K'Neged HaZerem*, p. 295; *HaNe'esham HaSheni, Ma'avako Shel Zvi Rosenblat L'Gilui HaEmet*, Y. Nedava, ed. (Tel Aviv, 1986), pp. 61-63; Avraham Yitshak Kook, "Lo L'Olam Muaka...", Dan Schlesinger, ed. (Tel Aviv, 2005); *HaHed*, June 1934. Radler-Feldman, a leading editor and founding member of Brit Shalom, also signed Kook's proclamations on behalf of Stavsky's innocence and defended Kook from political left-wing attack.
- 64 Mapai Central Committee, Aug. 20 and 29, 1934; Sept. 22, 1934; Oct. 21, 1934; all in Bet Berl; Avidor, *HaIsh K'Neged HaZerem*, pp. 285-291; Goldstein, *B'Derekh L'Hegmonia*, pp. 202-204; *HaHed*, Oct. 1934. Kook also issued a Jewish New Year's message on "Repentance and Peace" (Sept. 2, 1934, file 193-P, JA) and reiterated the need for unity in a message to the jubilee celebration of Hovevei Zion (*HaHed*, Oct. 1934). Katznelson drafted a statement for Mapai which, while censuring Revisionist and Brit HaBiryonim tactics, called for unity. See "To the Yishuv and the Entire Zionist Movement," n.d., file 4-6-1934-237, Bet Berl. For Katznelson's cynical response against the Histadrut majority vote, see Histadrut Va'ad HaPo'el, Oct. 21, 1934, Makhon Lavon.
- 65 Mapai Central Committee, Aug. 2, 1934, Bet Berl; Jabotinsky to Sirkis, Sept. 8, 1934, A340/18, CZA; Menahem Sarid, *LaShilton Behartanu: HaMa'avak Al HaHegmonia BaYishuv U'VaTsiyonut* (Herzliya, 2004), part 4; Oct. 26, 1934 agreement, file 32/4/1, JA; Schechtman, *Fighter and Prophet*, pp. 246-255, 276. Jacob Frank (1726-1791) founded a sect in Eastern Europe which proclaimed him the Jewish messiah.
- 66 *HaArakhot V'Tai'urim Shel Ishiyuto U'Peulotav Shel HaRav Natan Milikovsky Al Yedei Ishim Yedu'im B'nai Zemano*, Sa'adya Milikovsky Netanyahu, ed. (n.p., n.d.); *HaTur*, Feb. 20, 1935; Kook to Dizengoff, Feb. 22, 1935, file 4-3737A, Tel Aviv Archives; *HaRav*, Zvi Nerya, ed. (Jerusalem, 1938), pp. 70-71; Simha Raz, *Malakhim K'Venei Marom* (Jerusalem, 1994), p. 420. For Ahimeir's later evaluation of Kook's activity during the trial, see *HaYarden*, Oct. 6, 1935. For Klausner's view, see *HaMashkif*, Sept. 6, 1940.
- 67 *Jabotinsky B'Ree HaDorot*, Yosef Nedava, ed. (Tel Aviv, 1985), p. 101; Jan Zouplna, "The Evolution of a Concept: The Relationship Between State and Religion in the Thought of Vladimir Jabotinsky, 1919-1940," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, 4 (Mar. 2005), 13-31; Jabotinsky, *Mikhtavim*, pp. 210-211; Schechtman, *Fighter and Prophet*, pp. 284-290, 448-460. Also see Jabotinsky's letter of May 2, 1935, to Ben-Gurion, cited in Eri Jabotinsky, *Avi, Ze'ev Jabotinsky* (Tel Aviv, 1980), pp. 101-102; Eliezer Don-Yehiya, "Bein Leumiyyut L'Dat: HaTemura B'Emdat Jabotinsky Kelapei HaMasoret HaDatit," in A. Bareli and P. Ginossar, eds., *Ish BaSa'ar: Masot U'Mehkarim Al Ze'ev Jabotinsky* (Tel Aviv, 2004), pp. 159-186.
- 68 Schechtman, *Fighter and Prophet*, pp. 445-448, 460-465; Ben-Gurion to Golomb, Sept. 12, 1938, S5/542, CZA; Mordekhai Tanenbaum-Tamaroff, *Dapim Min*

- HaDeleika* (Jerusalem, 1982), p. 172; Moshe Arens, "Not United in a Common Struggle," unpublished MS., courtesy of the author; Tsimand to Kaplan, Oct. 3, 1944, file Ayin (Akiva)/19/6, Masua Archives, Tel-Yitshak, Israel, courtesy of my graduate student Moshe Uriel; Yehuda Lapidot, *Ha'Saison*, *Tsed Alum* (Tel Aviv, 1994).
- 69 Shlomo Nakdimon, *Altalena* (Jerusalem, 1978); Shmuel Katz, "Don't Invoke the 'Altalena'," *Jerusalem Post*, July 28, 2005; Ilana Tsur's *Altalena* (1994 documentary film); Yitshak Rabin, with Dov Goldstein, *Pinkas Sheirut* (Tel Aviv, 1979), p. 566. (This does not appear in the condensed English edition of the autobiography, *The Rabin Memoirs*.) Because Stavsky was engaged in illegal immigration activity after his release from prison, the British accepted Wauchope's recommendation in February 1935 not to grant the Revisionist Zionist a Palestine entry visa. He never entered the country thereafter. CO 733/278/75146/1, PRO.
- 70 Jabotinsky speech, Jan. 6, 1935; Jabotinsky to Melchett, June 3, 1935; Ahimeir to Jabotinsky, n.d.; all in Jabotinsky file, Ahimeir Archives; Ahimeir and Shatski, *Hayinu Sikrikim*, p. 10; Kalman Katznelson, *Kovshim B'Metsuka* (Tel Aviv, 1983), pp. 56-58; *HaYarden*, Jan. 24, 1936; Mar. 6, 1936; Abba Ahimeir, *Ein HaKoreh* (Tel Aviv, 2003), pp. 26-34, 46-51; *HaMashkif*, May 30, 1946; Sept. 12, 1946; Sept. 19, 1947; Feb. 1, 1948; July 30, 1948; *Herut*, July 9, 1948; June 5, 1953; Aug. 15, 1955; June 13, 1958; Aug. 28, 1959; Aug. 4, 1961; June 1, 1962; Abba Ahimeir, *HaMishpat*; Ben-Zion Netanyahu, "Abba," *Sof Shavua*, Mar. 3, 1998; Gloria Deutsch, "My Father, Abba," *Jerusalem Post Magazine*, April 16, 2010. For the proposed deportations in 1935 of Ahimeir and his jailed associates as "undesirables", see CO 733/278/75146/2, PRO. Shammai the Elder (c. 50 B.C.E. -- c. 30 C.E.), and particularly his students (Bet Shammai), generally opposed the lenient rulings of his counterpart Hillel; Sikra alluded to the *sicari* and the Brit HaBiryonim.
- 71 One year after Begin joined the national unity government in 1967, the government began commemorating on Memorial Day all "casualties of Israel's wars"; the chief rabbinate changed the wording of the Yizkor memorial prayer to include the fighters in the underground; and official ceremonies were held beside the graves of the 12 Irgun and LEHI members who had been hanged. Retroactive casualty status and burial in military cemeteries were given to Irgun and LEHI fighters a decade later, with Irgun and LEHI museums transferred to the Defense Ministry. Udi Lebel, *HaDerekh El HaPantheon: Etsel, Lehi, U'Gevulot HaZikaron HaYisraeli* (Jerusalem, 2007). Repeated efforts in the 1960s to have official stamps issued in honor of those hanged by the British met with failure. File 14/9/20-P, Menahem Begin Center Archives (hereafter MBCA), Jerusalem, Israel. Only in December 1982, under the auspices of Begin's government, was a special series printed; Ahimeir received similar tribute in 2002.
- 72 *HaBoker*, June 14 and 24, 1955; *Shimshon Yunichman*, p. 130; Yehiam Veitz, "Tenuat HaHerut U'Mishpat Kastner," *Yahadut Zemanenu* 8 (1993), 243-260; Margot Klausner, *Sufat Sivan* (Tel Aviv, 1956); *Divrei HaKnesset*, 20 (Jerusalem, 1957), pp. 1955-1997; Shaul Avigur, "Im Yehuda Arazi," *Molad* 22 (Oct. 1964), 394-414; Tidhar, *B'Sheirut HaMoledet*, pp. 261, 373, 378-427; Shmuel Tamir, *Ben HaAretz*

- HaZot, Otobiografia*, 2 (Tel Aviv, 2002), pp. 1276-1277. Rosenblatt received an even larger court award in 1970 against Edwin Samuel for the latter's memoir, which pointed an accusing finger at him, Stavsky, and the Brit HaBiryonim. Tamir, *Ben HaAretz HaZot*, pp. 1277-1278; Edwin Samuel, *A Lifetime in Jerusalem* (London, 1970), pp. 137-138.
- 73 *Davar*, May 15, 1973; *Ma'ariv*, June 15, 1973; Amnon Rubinstein, "HaTsad HaAfel Shel HaShemesh," *HaAretz*, June 29, 1973; Eliezer Livneh, "Parashat Retsah Arlosorov – Teruma L'Virur," *Ma'ariv*, July 10, 1973; *HaNe'esham HaSheni*, pp. 121-126; Tevet, *Retsah Arlosorov*, p. 268; Haim Yisraeli, *Megilat Hayim* (Tel Aviv, 2005), pp. 223-234. For Magda and Arlosoroff, see Anne M. Sigmund, *Die Frauen der Nazis* (Munich ed., 2000), pp. 110-111, 119-120. I am grateful to my brother, Professor Jordan S. Penkower, for bringing this source to my attention.
- 74 Ian Black, "Murder on the Beach," *Jerusalem Post*, June 16, 1978; Seligman letter to the editor, *Jerusalem Post*, July 4, 1978.
- 75 Tevet, *Retsah Arlosorov*; Yaacov Shavit, "Retsah Arlosorov: Mishpat Hozer," *HaAretz*, Feb. 5, 1982. Tevet's book did not persuade Michal Arlosoroff, who also conveyed to a sympathetic Ya'akov Ahimeir the personal pain that all who focused on the killers paid no attention to the personality and views of her grandfather. Yosef Nedava, ed. *Abba Ahimeir, HaIsh ShebHita Et HaZerem* (Tel Aviv, 1987), pp. 240-241.
- 76 *Mismakh, Merkaz HaHasbara*, Mar. 14, 1982, AR-683, MBCA; Zvi Rosenblatt, "HaNe'esham Ma'ashim," *Ma'ariv*, Mar. 1, 1982; Shavit, "Retsah Arlosorov"; Ben-Yeroham, *HaAlila HaGedola*, pp. 327-340; Nedava, *Abba Ahimeir*, pp. 26-27; Menahem Begin, "HaIsh V'HaTekufa," *Herut*, July 6, 1962; *Deuteronomy*, 16:20. Ben-Yeroham had published the first half of this study in his *Sefer Betar: Korot U'Mekorot*, 2:1 (Tel Aviv, 1973), pp. 25-143, under the title "HaAkedah" ("The Sacrifice"). The reprinted edition of 1982, with its new title ("The Great Libel"), added a second section and a lengthy critique of Tevet's book. For a legal analysis of the Bekhor Commission's work, coupled with a study of the controversial "Kastner Trial," see Asher Maoz, "Historical Adjudication: Courts of Law, Commissions of Inquiry, and 'Historical Truth,'" *Law and History Review* 18 (Fall 2000), 559-606.
- 77 *Va'adat HaHaikra L'Hakirat Retsah Dr. Haim Arlosorov H"YD, Din V'Heshbon* (Jerusalem, 1985), pp. 2-4, 202, and *passim*. (The commission's files are located at the ISA.) Berkowitz alone declared that he agreed with Valero in concluding that Medjid and Darwish were, indeed, the killers. *Ibid.*, p. 193. Begin agreed to set up a commission regarding the massacre on September 16-18, 1982, in the two refugee camps after President Yitshak Navon threatened to resign. That body, chaired by Supreme Court President Yitshak Kahan, found that Begin was "indifferent" to the events in Lebanon, but did not find him, or Israel in general, directly responsible for the massacre in Sabra and Shatila; Defense Minister Ariel Sharon was sharply criticized, and he promptly resigned. The death of Begin's wife in November 1982, his failing health, the army's quagmire in Lebanon, and economic problems all contributed to Begin's leaving office on August 28, 1983, to be succeeded by Yitshak Shamir.

- 78 Sima Arlosoroff to Begin, Feb. 3, 1969; Begin to S. Arlosoroff, Mar. 27, 1969; both in file OP-203, MBCA; Menahem Begin and Ita Artsi, "Avraham Stavsky As We Knew Him," n.d.; Begin to Tevet, n.d.; both in file 9/22/20-P, MBCA; Begin statement, June 4, 1985; Ahimeir to Begin, June 5, 1985; Begin to Ahimeir, June 17, 1985; all in file 9/22/20-P, MBCA; Begin statement, June 4, 1987, file RT-27, MBCA. Rosenblatt had died in July 1984.
- 79 Ahimeir interview with the author, June 30, 2004; Bekher, *B'Ikvot Ne'elamim*; Shmuel Dotan, *Adumim: HaMiflaga HaKomunistit B'Eretz Yisrael* (Kfar Saba, 1991), pp. 184-195; Binaymin Pinkus review, *Iyunim B'Tekumat Yisrael*, 3 (1993), 497-511. An earlier book had suggested in 1984 that the British and the Arabs each had reason for hostility to Arlosoroff. Black, *Transfer Agreement*, pp. 147, 149. For the most recent appeal to reinvestigate a possible Communist involvement, see Asher Eilani, "*HaIm HaKomunistim Ratshu Et Arlosorov?*," *Makor Rishon*, June 18, 2007.
- 80 *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, Nov. 7, 1997; BBC News, Nov. 14, 1997; *Yediot Aharonot*, Mar. 17, 2000; Sarah Hoenig, "Searing Sense of Injustice," *Jerusalem Post*, May 17, 2000. In *Probe Magazine* (July-Aug. 1999), Israeli independent journalist Barry Chamish asserted that Israeli Knesset member Binyamin Elon had told a film director off camera that, one month before the assassination, former operations commander of Lohamei Herut Yisrael (LEHI) and Prime Minister (on behalf of Likud) Yitshak Shamir had called Elon into his office and told him the following: "They are planning to do another Arlosoroff on us. Last time they did it, we did not get into power for fifty years. I want you to identify anyone you hear of threatening to murder Rabin and stop him." Chamish added that Elon gave testimony to the Shamgar Commission investigating the assassination, then kept silent. Confirming this episode years later, Elon pinpointed that his meeting with Shamir actually took place on August 29, 1995, precisely the sixtieth anniversary on the Hebrew calendar (3 Elul) of Rav Kook's death. Elon interview with the author, June 4, 2007.
- 81 Anna Klabunde, *Magda Goebbels* (Boston, 2002); *New Statesman*, May 5, 2002; <http://www.notes.co.il/karny/1074.asp>; *Jerusalem Report*, Nov. 15, 2004, p. 48; CBS News, Nov. 4, 2005. A former British soldier's memoir, published at this time, began by stating unequivocally that "Arlosoroff's killers were right-wing Jews." Philip Brutton, *A Captain's Mandate, Palestine: 1946-1948* (London, 1996), xii.
- 82 Yosi Ahimeir, "Mamshikhim L'Ha'alil Al HaHafim MiPesha," *Makor Rishon*, June 16, 2008; Shlomo Nakdimon and Shaul Maizlish, *De Haan, HaRetsah HaPoliti HaRishon B'Eretz Yisrael* (Tel-Aviv, 1985); Shimon Rubenstein, "Parashat DeHaan, Retsah Politi O Hotsa'a L'Horeg Shel Mosdot 'HaMedina ShehBaderekh'?", *Kivunim* 25 (May 1985), 5-29; Yosef Ahimeir, "E.L. Yaffe Neged Alilat HaDam," *B'Eretz Yisrael*, Mar. 1982, 10-11.
- 83 Anita Shapira, *Land and Power: The Zionist Resort to Force, 1881-1948* (New York, 1992), pp. 144, 151, 198, 301; Yudelevitz to parents, June 11, 1934, A192/231, CZA. George Jacques Danton (1759-1794), an early activist in the French Revolution against the monarchy, was guillotined by opponents on the Committee of Public Safety. Kook was abroad on a long trip during the time of De Haan's murder;

that killing persuaded Hebrew University professor Shmuel Hugo Bergman of the grave danger lying in wait for Jewry because of his people's penchant for "self-righteousness." See Bergman to Nahama Leibowitz, Dec. 23, 1957, Bergman MSS., file 1502/4, Jewish National Library. I am grateful to Dr. Yehudah Mirsky for bringing this correspondence to my attention.

- 84 Sacher to Ben-Gurion, July 28, 1934, file IV-104-49-2-69A, Makhon Lavon; Shmuel Katz, *Lone Wolf: A Biography of Vladimir (Ze'ev) Jabotinsky*, 2 (New York, 1996), p. 1389; Cabinet Meetings, Aug. 3, 1958, vol. 11, ISA; *Herut*, Sept. 26, 1964; *HaAretz*, Mar. 3, 1932; Ahimeir and Shatski, *Hinenu Sikrikim*, pp. 24, 26, 30; Leibowitz to Y. Ahimeir, Oct. 8, 1978, Ahimeir MSS., published in Yosef Ahimeir, "Ha'Sod' Shel Yeshayahu Leibowitz Ha'Sha'aga' Shel Yitshak Henkin," *HaUma* 32 (1994/1995), 347-50; Reuven Yaron, "Yeshayahu Leibowitz U'Parashat Retsah Arlosorov," *HaUma* 32 (fall 1994), 203-204. Magnes never abandoned his belief that the Revisionists had killed Arlosoroff. Magnes to Reb Binyamin, Dec. 31, 1944, A357/61, CZA. Some *Judenraeten*, Jewish Councils created by the Germans during World War II to help in running the ghettos, were accused at the time and later of collaborating with the enemy.
- 85 Adir Kohen, *B'Ruah Se'ara, Perakim B'Hayav U'Mifalo Shel Yehuda Arazi* (Tel Aviv, 1986), pp. 140-141; *Deuteronomy*, 19:10; *Isaiah*, 1:27; Yosef Klarman, "Jabotinsky V'Ahimeir," *HaUma* 86 (1987), 435-37; Zvi Yehuda Kook, *L'Shlosha B'Elul*, (Jerusalem, 1938), p. 48.
- 86 At the end of 2008, a Be'er-Sheva street sign in Arlosoroff's honor declared that he "was murdered by Arabs." Outraged, two local Arab lawyers asked the city's comptroller to order that the sign be removed, and demanded that the municipality publicly apologize. Said one: "This hurts our feelings and causes irreversible damage – especially because this is a mixed city that constitutes a model of coexistence." The city responded that the sign was a mistake and would be removed. *HaAretz*, Dec 23, 2008. Six months later, as reported in a blog by Yossi Regev (whose mother had been the secretary of the *Hazit Ha'Am* editorial board and a Brit HaBiryonim member), Aryeh Yitshaki asserted that his projected book would reveal that the C.I.D. was guilty of Arlosoroff's murder. See www.tapuz.co.il/blog/ViewEntry.asp?EntryId=1271371, no. 47.

**Shlomo Ben-Yosef:
From a British Gallows to Israel's Pantheon to Anonymity**

I

WELL BEFORE MORNING'S LIGHT ON APRIL 21, 1938, EIGHTEEN-YEAR-old Avraham Schein bestirred himself for a deadly mission. During the past two years, at least 125 of Palestine's Jewish yishuv (community) had been murdered by local Arab bands, then in open rebellion against the British mandatory power. Upper Galilee settlements proved especially vulnerable, the Jews of Tsfat (Safed) cabling High Commissioner Harold MacMichael at the end of March 1938 that they "are before the eyes of the government as though in a concentration camp, under the pressure of relentless terror." Six Jews had just been killed while traveling together between Tsfat and Rosh Pina, one female passenger first raped and then mutilated by knives. The brutal incident shook Schein and his comrades in the isolated Rosh Pina's Betar youth contingent, acquaintances of the young woman and themselves contending repeatedly with shootings and the torching of their fields near the Arab village of Jaouni. On April 17, the much admired David Ben-Gaon, who had served in that settlement's Betar group before giving a hand to Hanita's creation and the founding of Nahariya, and three others fell victim to yet another Arab attack. The time had come, Schein concluded, to retaliate.¹

Confronted by the Palestinian-Arab revolt, the Zionist establishment and its dominant left-wing Mapai party continued to hew to a policy of *havlagah* (restraint). To the labor-class newspaper *Davar*, "purity of weapons" had to be maintained alongside the fundamental right of self-defense. A biblical "eye for an eye" response, warned Jewish Agency for Palestine Executive chairman David Ben-Gurion, jeopardized the yishuv's hopes of securing Great Britain's crucial support on behalf of "the state in the making." The fate of not only the 400,000 Jews currently living in the biblically Promised Land but that of future immigration, insisted the pre-eminent Mapai ideologue, Berl Katznelson, demanded a focus on increased settlement and legally armed units. This stance achieved near legendary triumph with Hanita's creation overnight on March 21, 1938, near the Lebanese border as a "*homa u'migdal*" (stockade and watchtower) outpost, aimed at gaining a foothold in a strategic region hitherto devoid of Jews. In

all, fifty-five new settlements were to be founded between 1936 and 1939.²

Some members of the Jewish Agency's military defense organization thought *havlaga* intolerable. Voices within the Hagana, first set up to counter Arab riots in 1920 and responsible for Hanita's success, expressed the conviction that this "humiliating" stance in the face of rising Arab terrorism would likely bring demoralization and destroy the Zionist enterprise. Echoing the rabbinic teaching that one must rise early to kill an adversary coming to murder you, Hagana members carried out a few unauthorized attacks on their own. Twice such activities received official yishuv sanction, one by Katznelson after the murder of two nurses in Jaffa (Yafo). Indiscriminate retaliation proved not to be the norm, however, the Jewish Agency effectively exercising control over the Hagana.³

Not so for the adherents of "Irgun B," calling themselves the Irgun Tsva'i Leumi ("Etsel") as early as 1932. Sharply dissenting from what they deemed the criminal passivity of the Jewish Agency-Hagana line, a few ex-Hagana officers pressed their own political leader for strong action. Vladimir Jabotinsky, head of the right-wing Revisionist New Zionist Organization (NZO) that called for Jewish sovereignty on both sides of the Jordan River, opposed the killing of blameless Palestinian-Arab civilians, however. Emphasizing the diplomatic arena, he strove to protect the yishuv with a British revival of the Jewish Legion, which he and Joseph Trumpeldor had helped establish during World War I to aid His Majesty's Government in defeating Ottoman rule throughout Palestine. Forbidden by London to re-enter Palestine after 1930, the fifty-eight-year-old Jabotinsky could not rein in the underground Etsel militants, their numbers augmented by many graduates of his worldwide Betar youth movement. On November 14, 1937, the Irgun commenced a series of retaliatory attacks. This "first black day," declared former Hagana Jerusalem commander David Raziell, erased "the shame" of *havlaga* and the Zionist Left's "defeatist" acceptance of Britain's current offer of a small Jewish commonwealth in partitioned Palestine. Only war in this fashion, he stressed, could end the Arab terror and achieve "the nationalist aspirations of the Jewish people."⁴

This activist response proved short-lived. Britain's instituting military courts at the end of November, including the sentence of hanging for anyone caught with arms, dictated a reassessment. Divisions within the Irgun, its limited strength, and the placing of forty-five prominent Revisionists in the Akko (Acre) prison all combined to take their toll. Earlier, as head of Betar's "mobilized companies" (*plugot giyus*) in the Upper Galilee, Shimshon

Yunitchman had threatened to resign over his organization's inaction, and pressed the Irgun in Jerusalem to act. In the spring of 1938, however, he kept a tight leash on the Rosh Pina group, and prevented three youngsters from carrying out a separatist attack. Moshe Moldovsky, the regional Irgun commander, planned a few operations in the area, not all crowned with success. One involved an assault by six men against an Arab bus on the road going up from Rosh Pina to Safed, but the project was delayed a number of times. After some frustrated Betarim sought weapons from Shalom Zuravin, then in charge of the movement's arms cache, he asked Moldovsky what to reply. "When the son wishes to go to a house of prostitution," the commander answered, "he does not ask his father for permission." Zuravin understood the hint.⁵

Schein took the lead. Having reached Palestine as a child with his parents from the Polish town of Valkovisk, the recent graduate of Tel Aviv's Herzlia secondary school made his mark in Rosh Pina for fluency in Hebrew and English and for a jingoistic literary style. Yunitchman's accounts of HaShomer, romantic fighters on horseback who had protected Palestinian Jewry in the early years of settlement, exercised an impact. Schein and comrades also admired the account by Hebrew University professor Joseph Klausner of past Jewish armed struggle, *When A Nation Fights for its Freedom*. The lyrics of Uri Zvi Greenberg carried special power, especially the Revisionist poet's messianic vision in "Judah Today, Judah Tomorrow" of a nation redeemed once Jews ascended British gallows in Jerusalem, Jaffa, and Acre. The impressionable Schein went on to describe in the Betar company diary one of his own dreams about Jewry's achieving independence in Eretz Israel, victory only attained once the hanging of three young men for an unauthorized action sparked a general revolt among the yishuv's youth. A few days before April 21, 1938, Schein lifted his glass in a toast to the first Jew who would be hanged in the country and pave the way to a people's redemption.⁶

By then, he had secured Zuravin's agreement to join the mission. This twenty-three-year-old, educated in Jerusalem and originally a member of the Left youth movement, found more conducive Betar's philosophy of "*Kibbush HaAvoda HaIvrit*" (conquering Hebrew labor) with uncompromising nationalist ideals. Out of respect for Betar discipline, Zuravin had rejected at first a request from Schein, who bunked next to him, to carry out an attack on their own. A member of the Irgun's "wandering band" to defend Galilee settlements, Zuravin was chosen to participate in Moldovsky's scheme to

attack an Arab bus. The plan's repeated postponement, Moldovsky's suggested green light, and a statement by one of the Betar commanders that everything had been done to avenge Ben-Gaon's murder persuaded Zuravin to follow Schein. A third Betari agreed to join the pair, but Shalom Rosenfeld, head of the local company who had earlier exhorted that "only through suffering and tribulations will the Messiah come," shifted him to another group. Quickly, Schein arranged for a substitute: Shlomo Ben-Yosef.⁷

A more devoted candidate could not have been found. Joining Betar at the age of thirteen in Luck, Poland, Shlomo Tabacznik ultimately bade farewell to his widowed mother and, in possession of only a small bag and a set of phylacteries when traveling with fifty-three other comrades in September 1937 aboard the first "illegal" Betar ship to challenge British immigration quotas, realized his fondest hope of reaching Eretz Israel. His seriousness and an ability to undertake the hardest physical tasks in Rosh Pina's tobacco and olive groves soon earned widespread admiration. Adopting his father's second Hebrew name, Ben-Yosef insisted that the movement was "entitled to and had to chart the path in life" of every Betari well beyond the required two years of mobilized-company enlistment. His tall, broad-shouldered frame, strengthened by training in the Polish army, regularly drew attention. Yet Ben-Yosef's reticent demeanor, likely influenced by years of grinding poverty in Luck, most brought to mind the poem about "anonymous soldiers" who, conscripted for life, dreamt of dying for their nation's independence. These stanzas, authored in 1932 by Raziel's close associate Avraham Stern (pen name "Yair"), became the hymn of the Irgun. Shocked by the March 1938 Arab assault nearby against the six car passengers, Ben-Yosef wrote tersely to a friend living abroad that while he was haunted by "the slaughter of the atrocity," "we fall silent." For the twenty-five-year-old, Schein's request was a ready call to arms.⁸

Additional Revisionist influences played their part in this decision. Jabotinsky's novel *Samson*, with its vivid portrait of the biblical hero's combination of "iron and laughter," rang true to Ben-Yosef's own nature. Evenings in Rosh Pina would include songs that always highlighted the Betar hymn bearing Jabotinsky's climactic line "to die or to conquer the mountain," which Ben-Yosef copied into his own notebook. He asked friends to decipher meanings in the poetry of Greenberg, and much appreciated the strident newspaper columns of Abba Ahimeir and Yehoshua Yeivin's novel *Jerusalem Awaits*. The latter two writers, joined by Greenberg, had demanded a maximalist Revisionist program as expressed in their small Brit HaBiryonim

("Alliance of Ruffians"), an anti-British revolt with authoritarian overtones that Jabotinsky refused to embrace. Their exhortations in the early 1930s for unqualified sacrifice, such as jail terms and even death on the gallows, to achieve the Jewish nation stirred Ben-Yosef and fellow Betarim deeply.⁹

Schein, Zuravin, and Ben-Yosef entertained no illusions as to the price that might be paid. Another Betar member, Yehezkel Altmann (later Ben-Hur), serving as a Jewish guard in the British police force, had decided to attack an Arab bus on his personal initiative four months earlier after five Jewish farmers in Kiryat Anavim had been killed and Jewish cars regularly fired upon. An Arab child died in the incident. Altmann was brought to military trial after turning himself in to the mandatory authorities. On February 4, 1938, he was sentenced to be hanged. Altmann waited for one week in the red clothes of the condemned in Acre prison, until General Archibald Wavell, then heading all British forces in the Middle East, reduced the sentence to life imprisonment. Clemency for such cases in the future appeared highly unlikely, especially given that the British had hanged more than forty Arabs for terrorist activity since the November 1937 Emergency Regulations had gone into effect. The three Betarim had resolved, however, to proceed "no matter what, even at the cost of their heads."¹⁰

Quietly taking two pistols and some explosive charges from the Betar arms depot, the trio reached their agreed upon spot at 5 a.m. for the eventual ambush. Just as the Arab bus from Tverya (Tiberias) approached at the expected hour of 11 a.m., a taxi with Jews passed. Not wanting to injure the latter travelers, the three held their fire and the bus continued on its uphill journey unscathed. The disappointed Betarim ruled out a return to Rosh Pina: not acting would weaken the stance of those favoring retaliation; it would be difficult to secure weapons again; and their unauthorized step might lead to dismissal from the company. Deciding to wait for the bus on its return from Safed, they suffered in the heat, without food or water, until 1:30 p.m. As the bus came by, Schein fired his mauser once before the gun jammed, Zuravin emptied the entire magazine of his parabellum, and Ben-Yosef threw a handmade bomb. While the bomb did not explode, the crack of gunshots, although not hitting the bus, spurred the driver to increase his downhill speed and alert the Rosh Pina police station. Schein, Zuravin, and Ben-Yosef made for a deserted cow shed 800 meters away. Very soon thereafter, constables arrived at their hiding place and arrested the three Betarim.¹¹

According to Schein and Zuravin's later reminiscences, a Jewish policeman named Mizrahi, who first reached the shed, betrayed them. Told

that they were illegal immigrants, he promised to take care of the matter. Instead, Mizrahi returned in a few minutes with additional forces, took out one of the three young men hiding there, and told his British superior that two others were inside. Knowing that hanging awaited them, the trio coolly accepted their fate. Zuravin and Ben-Yosef each took a cigarette offered them by the British officer, and Schein volunteered to disarm the unused explosives. They were driven to the Rosh Pina police station, then dispatched for additional questioning in Safed.¹²

An inquiry soon thereafter by the Hagana's intelligence service offered a very different version, concluding that the Betarim adamantly refused opportunities to escape punishment. An Arab policeman found them inside the shed, while Schein dismissed a Jewish constable's advice that the three not admit to the possession of weapons. During the Rosh Pina interrogation, they proclaimed that they sought retribution for the killing of Jews and would go to the gallows "with joy as national heroes," their action "a tremendous political demonstration." The group reiterated this stance in Safed, where they sang and appeared in high spirits. Further investigation turned up Schein's many private writings on revenge and the value of courageous death; when asked about worry for his mother, Schein replied that he had brothers and sisters, and that she would appreciate the "magnitude of his undertaking."¹³

Years later, the testimony of former Hagana member Nahum Auster, one of the three Jewish policemen present at the arrest, supplemented that contemporary inquiry with additional details. The Betarim's purposefully loud conversation led two Arab policemen, whose car had broken down nearby, to enter the shed with guns drawn. Auster's efforts to have Schein not turn over the weapons and remain silent failed; the three refused, as well, to accept the suggestion of a Jewish sergeant at the Rosh Pina station that they say nothing during the inquiry. Commanding British officer Martin in Safed also tried to cover up the action, with Auster serving as the Hebrew translator for the questioning there. Immediately upon Martin's first query, however, Schein asserted in English that "it was our duty to revenge the blood of the murdered Jews." To Martin and Auster's request that they not testify in court, the Betarim insisted on their right to do so. The three were then escorted, in chains and under heavy guard, to the Acre fortress.¹⁴

Betar and the Irgun were taken entirely by surprise. Immediately after the interrogation in Safed, Auster warned Rosenfeld by telephone to get rid of all the company's weapons in Rosh Pina, since the police intended to conduct a search of the premises. Rosenfeld responded that the local Betar had not

ordered the attack. As for the Irgun, while praising Ben-Gaon's killing of some attackers before his death as befit a true warrior, it dissociated the militant organization from the action of April 21. None of its operations had ended with "zero results and serious failure as this," read Etzel's announcement one week later; such empty gestures, independent steps, and "child's play" were not acceptable.¹⁵

The self-proclaimed "responsible bodies" of the yishuv roundly condemned the action. *Davar's* editors went so far as to declare on April 26 that if Jewish hands were involved, then this "stabbing in the back" of the yishuv by underground, isolated elements made it obligatory to "uproot all bacteria of the destructive insanity." For the Jewish Agency, the youngsters' repudiation of *havlaga* represented "a breach of national discipline." More ominously, an official statement went on, the "morally reprehensible" attack "seriously endangers the entire yishuv, threatens its peace and progress, and embarrasses it in its fight against terrorism." By contrast, *Al-Difa* and *Falastin* of the Arab press reserved comment, reporting the facts as transmitted by the police.¹⁶

The NZO leadership in Palestine, by majority vote, decided to do everything in its power to free Schein, Zuravin, and Ben-Yosef. Philip Joseph and Aharon Hoter-Yishai, hired for the legal defense, advised that the baby-faced Schein be presented as under the age of 18 and Zuravin *non compos mentis*, with an alibi provided for Ben-Yosef. Yunitichman, who visited the prisoners on a regular basis, endorsed this stand at first. The Betarim objected strongly, however, wanting to use the trial as a political weapon. "We are not children in a playpen!" Ben-Yosef burst out. After the departure of a Betar delegation, assuring that they would soon be freed, he cursed and exclaimed to Schein and Zuravin: "Let them allow us to die in peace!"¹⁷

Aryeh Kotzer opposed the majority NZO view. During this Irgunist's visit to the jailed Betarim, Schein had passed a hand across his neck in signaling an expectation of the three being hanged; the taciturn Ben-Yosef gave his usual smile. The three must have considered the inevitable consequences in case their plan did not work, Kotzer reasoned to himself, and the trial should be turned into a public platform to present the nationalist-Zionist demands and to detail Great Britain's "treason" against Jewry. Only Avraham Stern accepted Kotzer's fundamental premise, while thinking that conditions in the yishuv had not surfaced which would value the trials of fighters for Jewish independence. Stern told Kotzer that the British would likely free the three, since the accused had not injured anyone and a world

outcry would emerge otherwise; Jabotinsky, a nineteenth-century liberal and head of a legal political party, would not permit the three to endanger their lives now. Seeing the failed operation as a reflection of the Irgun's own indecisive stand regarding *havlaga*, Stern determined that the time had not arrived to question Jabotinsky's authority – yet.¹⁸

Since Stern did not rule out an approach to the three young men, Kotzer pressed his case with Yunitchman. To his surprise, the Betar official finally agreed, but added that he would follow Jabotinsky's decision as definitive. The two visited the Acre prison, where Kotzer minced no words. The British will hang you, so demand and prepare for a major political trial, he insisted. His concluding exhortation, "entertain no illusions!", did not faze the jailed Betarim. They looked to Yunitchman, as if seeking his response. Ben-Yosef then spoke out in a coarse mixture of Hebrew and Yiddish: "We will not embarrass Betar and the head of Betar.... We will know how to receive our fate with honor.... All that he commands we shall do." Schein nodded in consent, while Zuravin said nothing. Horrified, Kotzer realized that the great chance for a political trial had just slipped away. And indeed, a slip of paper in Jabotinsky's Hebrew handwriting eventually arrived: "Ben-Yosef: This is an order to inform me that you submit and cease the propaganda." Remaining true to Betar discipline, the trio gave in.¹⁹

Notwithstanding its firm opposition to the action of the accused, the Jewish Agency quietly provided a substantial contribution for the legal defense required. Yunitchman failed to obtain funds for lawyers' fees from the financially strapped NZO in Palestine, and the families of Schein and Zuravin approached the Agency for help. Aside from humanitarian considerations, the Executive wished to save the yishuv and the Zionist movement from "the terrible shock" that would be experienced if a death sentence were carried out on a Jew, particularly in view of the relentless assaults under which the yishuv had been laboring for the past two years. The April 21 attack could be regarded as that of individuals reacting on their own to Arab terrorism. A reasonable distinction might be made between those who wantonly attacked the yishuv and those who, "albeit misguidedly," reacted in similar fashion. Although most of the yishuv did not favor acts of vengeance against innocent Arabs and the Executive did not identify with the perpetrators, the Agency's political department decided by a 4-1 vote – Ben-Gurion's reservation notwithstanding – to extend to Schein, Zuravin, and Ben-Yosef the necessary assistance.²⁰

The Betarim's decision to relinquish a political trial in favor of a purely

juridical proceeding led police to change its venue. Originally to be held in the all-Arab city of Nazareth, where a large crowd of Jewish spectators and reporters would not likely assemble, the trial's location shifted to Haifa. The military tribunal, consisting of Major Sim as presiding officer, Major Hambelton, and Lieutenant Tuffill, would convene on Kingsway Street. The second floor auditorium of the beautiful building accommodated an audience of 200. Captain Robertson of Scotland would present the case for the prosecution against the defense team of Canadian-born Joseph and his assistant, native Palestinian Hoter-Yishai. One month after the attack, the time for official judgment had arrived.²¹

II

Shortly before 10 a.m. on May 24, 1938, a fanfare of trumpets outside the hall announced the arrival of the court. A section of troops under the command of a corporal, carrying rifles with fixed bayonets, filed in next and sat down behind the judges. Shackled hand and foot, the accused then entered the room, accompanied by a constable. Once they were seated in the dock, their chains were removed. On the table before the bench lay the exhibits in the case: some pipe bombs, pistols, cartridge cases, and ammunition. Few outsiders were present. The atmosphere was tense as the president announced in English, with Hebrew and Arabic translations to follow, that the accused were charged under Section 8 A (a), 8 A (b), 8 A (c) of the Emergency Regulations with discharging firearms, carrying lethal weapons, and throwing bombs.²²

For four days, the case dragged on. Joseph immediately appealed that separate trials should be conducted for the accused, but the court accepted Roberston's claim that the three had acted in a joint conspiracy. After the Betarim pleaded "not guilty," the prosecution began. The different policemen involved, the Arab driver and one passenger on his bus, and the Jewish distributor of work in Rosh Pina were called, cross-examined by Joseph and Hoter-Yishai, questioned again by Robertson, and then dismissed. Throughout, the accused sat quietly. Dressed in open-necked shirts and shorts, their faces appeared free of strain or worry. Seldom was reference made to those in the dock, while Schein alone could follow the proceedings in English. Translations in a "bewildering succession" of English, Hebrew, Arabic, Yiddish, and German kept the interpreters busy; at times the progress

was labored and slow. The number of people in the audience gallery dwindled daily. An enterprising commercial photographer, wandering freely around the court, took pictures and sold them afterwards to all interested buyers.²³

On the afternoon of the fourth day, Joseph opened the case for the defense. Ben-Yosef declared that while he was working for a Rosh Pina resident on April 21, police seized him in the cowshed. Zuravin's father spoke in Yiddish about lunacy on his wife's side of the family and specifically about his son's insanity, a fact corroborated by three specialists who had treated the young man. The Rosh Pina colony doctor testified that Ben-Yosef cleaned the outside of his house on the day in question, and that he had spoken to the accused at the time the shots were heard. By this time, the audience filled the auditorium, the outside hall, and the sidewalks of Kingsway St., sensing that something was going to happen at last. The judges then adjourned the trial for three days, when the defense and prosecution were to offer their addresses.²⁴

At 10 a.m. on June 3, 1938, citing British legal authorities and cases, Joseph began by asserting that the prosecution had failed to prove with "the highest degree of certainty" that the accused were guilty. No evidence connected Ben-Yosef with the offenses charged except that he was found in the cowshed. Nor had any witness identified Schein with having been at the scene of the crime or with possessing guns or bombs when discovered in the shed. As for Zuravin, while the prosecution had proved that he had weapons in his pocket when found in the shed, his past and current record of insanity called for acquittal. With men's lives at stake, Joseph concluded, a criminal case did not allow the prosecution to "make proof out of presumption."²⁵

Robertson summarized his witnesses' evidence, spanning the time from when three men had attacked the bus until they were seen running in the direction of the cowshed. The arrival within 25 minutes of policemen, who found the trio with weapons inside the rooms and later discovered two bombs near the bus which were of the exact type as those found in the shed, "precluded the possibility of mistaken arrest." When taken out of the shed, Schein had said that "two persons are inside." As to Hoter-Yishai's claim that this accused was under adult age, the defense had not procured his birth certificate. Upon his arrest, Schein's gesture of passing his finger across his throat as he looked to the sky indicated "a guilty mind." Zuravin's running away to the shed demonstrated that he wished to evade arrest; knowing that he acted contrary to law and in premeditated fashion ruled out the plea for an insane sense of "mission." Ben-Yosef's hiding in the deepest recesses of the

shed while the other two were being removed, as well as his not offering any explanation when interrogated for his presence there at that same moment, was not "mere coincidence." The accused were guilty, either in the first or second degree, Robertson ended.²⁶

At 5:40 p.m. the judges adjourned for deliberation, and returned twenty minutes later. Their findings were announced:

The court finds that accused number 1, Abraham Schein, is guilty of the first and second charge, and not guilty of the third charge. Accused number 2, Shalom Yehushua Zurabin, is found not guilty of all three charges on grounds of insanity and is ordered to be kept in custody as a criminal lunatic until further orders. The court finds accused number 3 [Ben-Yosef] guilty of the first and second charges and not guilty of the third charge.

The court then turned to the defense, and asked if it wished to say anything in mitigation of penalty.²⁷

Joseph commenced with a plea for Schein. Producing a telegram dated May 27 from Poland stating that the youngster was born in March 1921, together with a second noting that the birth certificate had been sent on June 2, he begged the court to suspend sentence or to declare Schein under age and therefore free of capital punishment or penal servitude. In impassioned tones, Joseph then pointed out that whatever the three did caused no loss of or injury to life. Given the strain of incessant Arab terrorism over the last two years, "it was small wonder that these boys could not maintain their equilibrium of mind." They belong to a people who never advocated or supported violence, and to make martyrs of them would "invite the wrong kind of influence." Never since the destruction of the Second Temple had a Jew been executed by order of a court of law in Palestine. There should be no question of political balance in this case: terrorists might revert to terrorism, but not so these youngsters, who worked in Rosh Pina to build up the country. That they might have fired shots on the bus may have saved lives, because the police were admittedly lying in wait expecting an attack on a Jewish bus, which attack did not then take place. Joseph concluded a four-and-a-half hour address thus: "If these boys are sentenced to death, it will be too hard a punishment on the Jewish community here and abroad."²⁸

The court adjourned for thirty-five minutes. When the judges returned,

Major Sim announced that Zuravin's age would be given consideration pending the arrival of proof as to his date of birth. Sim then proceeded to announce the verdict: "The court sentences Abraham Schein to be hanged by the neck until he is dead. The court sentences Shlomo Ben-Yosef to be hanged by the neck until he is dead." He added that these sentences were subject to confirmation by General Officer Commanding (G.O.C.) Robert H. Haining, who had succeeded Wavell in April. As the judges made their departure, Ben-Yosef jumped to his feet and shouted in Hebrew: "Long live Eretz Israel on both banks of the Jordan!" While some surprised Englishmen sought a translation, the cry stirred a greatly agitated Yunitchman and other Jews present in the clammy hall. Schein's sister collapsed into a chair with a shriek, and broke into uncontrolled sobbing. Without delay, Schein, Zuravin, and Ben-Yosef found themselves once again in a gray police van, on their way to a cell in the Acre fortress.²⁹

In London, Jabotinsky reacted quickly. That same day, he dispatched a telegram marked "urgent" to Colonial Secretary Malcolm MacDonald, appealing that he alone could intervene with Haining to stay the execution of Schein and Ben-Yosef. The Jewish community of Palestine had exhibited "superhuman self-restraint" against terror for the last two years, he observed, "and present case [is the] result [of] mental strain bordering on breakdown." A long letter the same day, with an identical one sent to the Jewish minister of war, Leslie Hore-Belisha, asked MacDonald to imagine himself or a child of his under these conditions. It then warned: "The Jewish people would never get reconciled to a situation which first drives youngsters to the verge of madness and then hangs them. This kind of martyrdom would only serve to release thousands of similar urges, ill mastered even now, [and] would only set a match to trails long laid." The NZO president concluded: It would be "a fateful error" that "central authority be compelled to abdicate" responsibility just in this case. He also persuaded Ireland's high commissioner in London to see MacDonald, who vaguely promised "to see what he can do."³⁰

The *Manchester Guardian's* editor, William P. Crozier, in receipt of a cable from Jabotinsky pressing a stance for clemency, seconded the appeal on June 6. The Jewish leaders, seeing the inability of police and military forces to restrain the Arab extremists, had continuously and successfully urged patience, Crozier observed. There was no excuse for the crime committed, but this was the first time that Jews were sentenced to death for carrying weapons. "A warning in itself," the sentence would "gain rather than lose" if, in this particular case, "mercy were set beside justice and the two young

men reprieved." The London *Jewish Chronicle* and the yishuv's English daily *Palestine Post* echoed these sentiments the same day.³¹

The two condemned young men exhibited no remorse and prepared for death. Writing to his parents on June 7, the same day that Arabs fatally shot Yisrael Lieberman of Rosh Pina's Betar group, Schein declared that he received the verdict with "complete coldness." His ancestors had died at the hands of the Inquisition, and he accepted "God's will" with "love and satisfaction." "I dreamt of falling a victim in the war for our freedom," Schein confessed; he wished their forgiveness for the pain that he caused them. The same day, Ben-Yosef urged his mother to forget him, or to be proud of his action, since many other Jewish sons ended their lives in a far more "humiliating and tragic" manner. He was "very proud" of his act, and took all "with honor and a happy heart." He closed with a special blessing to the Betar group in Luck, Poland, who would surely work more and more for our "exalted idea whose name is: the Jewish State."³²

Up to this point, the Jewish Agency Executive had kept silent, Ben-Gurion urging that it await the judges' verdict. The feisty chairman and Mapai head agreed with Yehuda Leib Fishman (later Maimon), the Mizrahi leader, that everything should be done to save the three "biryanim" (ruffians) from death, although he disagreed with Fishman's calling them "national zealots." They had committed a human and a "national crime," in Ben-Gurion's view, whose responsibility lay at the feet of their older Revisionist-Zionist educators. Yet the death sentence should be meted out to Arabs engaged in mass terror, not to Jews carrying weapons against that campaign. Hanging the Betarim, even though they had caused no harm, would likely push a part of the yishuv's youth to "acts of madness." If the Agency turned to the General Officer Commanding (G.O.C.), Ben-Gurion decided, its representatives had to argue for the sake of the yishuv, the great majority of whose youth despised such actions from the linked standpoint of morality and politics.³³

Now hearing the court's judgment, Moshe Shertok (later Sharett), political director of the Jewish Agency, sought an interview with Haining. The G.O.C. refused, suggesting that the Agency write him a letter, as it had done with Wavell when Altmann faced the gallows. On June 8, Shertok addressed "an earnest plea" for commutation of the death sentence to a term of imprisonment. Aside from the crime happily not leading to any loss of life, a death sentence would "cast a serious slur" on the yishuv, which consistently had refrained from retaliation and any aggression against innocent Arab civilians during the last two years. The G.O.C. had commuted the sentence

of life imprisonment passed on Aqil Muqbil in January 1938 by the Haifa military court, “in recognition of the good behavior of the Duwwara tribe” to which he belonged. On behalf of the Agency Executive, Shertok hoped that its submissions would receive Haining’s sympathetic consideration, and that clemency would be exercised in the present instance.³⁴

Ben-Gurion met with High Commissioner MacMichael to present the Agency’s argument in person. The interview was kept secret lest it cause harm and, in Shertok’s phrase, “harden the heart.” MacMichael did not raise formal questions, only remarking that the case was being weighed. With that, the tête-à-tête ended. Shertok then requested an interview with Haining in order to transmit additional facts, only to be rebuffed once again. He was also informed that no benefit would emerge from a meeting with the G.O.C.³⁵

MacDonald decided early on not to step in. A subordinate in the Colonial Office noted that the only possible course for the Secretary of State was to refuse to intervene in such cases; even if he did, he would not agree that there should be “one law for the Jews and another for the Arabs.” Accepting this viewpoint, MacDonald replied to Jabotinsky on June 7 that the power of reviewing sentences was vested in the G.O.C., and “I regret that it is quite impossible for me to intervene in such cases.” He reiterated the identical phrase three days later in a response to the chairman of the executive council of the Zionist Federation of Great Britain and Ireland, adding that he also could not act as a channel of communication for a message to the G.O.C. Appeals for clemency to King George V on the British monarch’s sixtieth birthday from Schein’s parents, Chief Rabbis Ya’akov Meir and Isaac Halevi Herzog of Palestine, as well as those of Tel Aviv and Jaffa, were forwarded to the Colonial Office – with equal result.³⁶

Aware that “I am, in black and white, the only final authority,” on June 7 Haining made clear the case as he saw it to superiors in the War Office. He wished thereby to insure that his decision – “whatever it may be” and which had to be taken “on the broad basis of impartial maintenance of law and order” – not be misrepresented. Someone will surely say that the Royal Prerogative of mercy, vested in the high commissioner as the king’s personal representative, should have been invoked. Yet the Attorney General in Palestine strongly believed that the High Commissioner should never interfere in military court cases. Haining doubted that any irregularities would be found in the trial proceedings, which had been “most thorough and painstaking.” “Crowds of telegrams” from Jabotinsky, Poland, New York, and elsewhere, as well as petitions from the Chief Ashkenazi Rabbi Herzog and

others and the "very helpful" Polish consul's formal representation on behalf of Schein and Ben-Yosef, had reached his desk. He was doing everything possible to verify Schein's true age in order to insure that no miscarriage of justice took place. No one mentions the Arab view, he observed, but all Jews look on Arabs as aggressors and lawbreakers, and "do not apparently understand that we are impartial."

If there were to be any comment or any official intervention from home, Haining underlined, he should be informed quickly, "or it will be too late." Having "thought and thought over this," he did not see how the circumstances put forward by the petitioners can be taken into account. "The law was deliberately flouted: and justice may be impartial." One Jew (Altmann), condemned to death in March in somewhat similar circumstances, obtained a reprieve, so this was not the first instance. Perhaps the War Office would wish to mention it to Colonial Office's Legal Advisor, Sir Grattan Bushe. A terse postscript followed the five-page letter: "I write that you may know facts."³⁷

The Colonial Office's top officials, receiving Haining's letter on June 13, discussed it in MacDonald's office that same evening. They were informed that the War Office would not take action unless the Colonial Office thought that action was required; in that case, "it would have to be done at once." Sir John Evelyn Shuckburgh, Deputy Under Secretary, pointed out to his colleagues that a Defense Regulation required the G.O.C. alone to confirm death sentences of a military court. There was "bound to be a lot of clamour over this case" in Parliament and elsewhere, he noted. If the Secretary of State (S. of S.) were to intervene at all, it could only be by private and personal suggestion to the High Commissioner that MacMichael adopt the "quite extraordinary course" of exercising the Royal Prerogative. "I take it," Shuckburgh's minute concluded, "that the S. of S. will not wish to act in this way." MacDonald, Bushe, and Sir Cosmo Parkinson, Permanent Under Secretary, concurred that "the matter was not one in which the S. of S. would be justified in intervening." Later that evening, Shuckburgh so informed the War Office, which telephoned in this sense to Haining.³⁸

Four days later, Va'ad HaLeumi (General Council) president Yitzhak Ben-Zvi reported that a highly placed British official confided in him and Herzog that hope existed to save Schein on grounds of age, but none at all for Ben-Yosef. Two accusations concerned Haining greatly: what would the Arabs say given that Arabs had been hanged for similar crimes, and clemency might cause future assaults by Jews because the April 21st attack

had occurred despite Altmann's reprieve. Harry Levin of the Jewish National Fund suggested that, as a last measure to possibly save the two young men, the Council invite the NZO separately or with other parties to issue a proclamation condemning acts of revenge. Ben-Zvi passed on the suggestion to Dr. Efraim Vashitz, NZO representative on the Council, whose answer was immediate: the Revisionists would consider such a step "disgraceful," and the NZO would join if the Council publicly justified the Betarim's action and stressed that it could no longer tolerate the current situation in the country. In any event, he would transmit the matter to his party, although doubting that it would accept the suggestion. On Ben-Zvi's secret request, Herzog pressed Vashitz, who remained firm while adding that he would accede to Jabotinsky's decision. Accordingly, with Ben-Zvi's knowledge, Herzog sent a cable to the NZO president in support of the proposal.³⁹

Vashitz gave a colleague his own version of these events. Ben-Zvi had been told by a journalist that, with the lives of Schein and Ben-Yosef at "knifepoint," British sources hinted that a proclamation by the Revisionists calling for *havlaga* could benefit the two. In the course of their conversation, Ben-Zvi softened his stance, proposing that the NZO join all the Council's parties in this declaration. Vashitz objected, but remarked that a final reply would have to come from his movement's authorized bodies. Upon later consultation with associate Yosef Katznelson, the two Revisionists agreed to inform Ben-Zvi that the decision lay in Jabotinsky's hands. Herzog then told Vashitz that "a high personality" had hinted along similar lines that morning. Echoing what he and Katznelson concluded, Vashitz replied that one should turn to London in this matter. Herzog thought this idea helpful, since a leading Jewish Agency official there could reach Jabotinsky directly. The Polish consul, rumored to be the "high personality," denied to Vashitz that he had spoken to Herzog about a pro-*havlaga* statement.⁴⁰

While Herzog received no reply from Jabotinsky by June 23, pressure for clemency mounted daily. Telegrams and letters inundated the Colonial Office from Jewish communities and Zionist organizations in Sofia, Kovno, Katowice, Montreal, Paris, and Warsaw. Representatives of the Foreign Office received petitions from Lithuania, Poland, Rumania, Bulgaria, and France. A police charge dispersed a "hostile" demonstration of 160 protestors before they could reach the British embassy in Warsaw. Addressing a mass meeting in London, Jabotinsky warned the mandatory power to either halt the terrorism or "allow our youth in Palestine to stop it." From this rostrum he sent Schein and Ben-Yosef his blessing, and cautioned that "if anything irrevocable

happens to them, tens of thousands of children will sit *shiva* [mourn] and their names will remain in the nation's memory as names of martyrs and giants."⁴¹

On the 18th, in receipt of a birth certificate declaring that Schein was under age, Haining altered the youngster's punishment to life imprisonment. (Revisionists in Poland had succeeded in producing a false document in order to save Schein.)⁴² Ben-Yosef had ruled out Schein's idea that poison be smuggled into the prison so that the British could not choose the moment and circumstances of their death, asserting that the pair had to demonstrate how to go to the gallows. Now, as Schein was abruptly transferred from their cell, the smiling Ben-Yosef called out to his comrade: "I will not embarrass anyone or Betar. I will know how to die." Six days later, Haining confirmed the court's sentence, execution set for June 29 at 8 a.m.⁴³

Jabotinsky immediately responded. Appealing to MacDonald's conscience, the NZO president warned the Colonial Secretary that the hanging would be considered "murder by all Jews without exception and deeply resented by most Christians, injecting irreparable poison in the very beginning of your stewardship of Palestine." He turned down Herzog's appeal, arguing that the suggested declaration would be interpreted as confirming the death sentence to be just, and might give the impression that the yishuv's institutions were "obligated or could prevent" a response whose "source lay in the government's guilt." Following up on the NZO executive's request, Philip Joseph sent a long letter to MacMichael, petitioning that he exercise the power of pardon as conferred by the king under article 16 of the Palestine Order-in-Council of 1922. Aside from no direct proof that the condemned had anything to do with an attack which caused no injury, Jewish public opinion would consider the execution a political act as "a mere counterbalance for previous Arab executions." It would not deter Arab terrorism, Ben-Yosef's chief defense lawyer closed, and "may very well result in the breakdown" of the self-restraint hitherto shown by the yishuv.⁴⁴

Privately, MacDonald found no fault with Haining's decision on Ben-Yosef, wondering only if the five-day postponement accorded with constitutional requirements: "If not, I should have thought it was unnecessary to keep this unhappy youth in mental agony so long." On the evening of June 22, Chaim Weizmann, president of the World Zionist Organization (WZO), had expressed satisfaction to MacDonald with the mandatory power's steps to counter Arab terrorism; these attacks would abate, he thought, if London unequivocally endorsed the creation of a viable Jewish state that might grow to two millions "in the course of time." A direct cable from the yishuv's chief

rabbis, mayors, and other leaders on June 24 sparked Weizmann to raise “a very painful subject” with MacDonald and ask by letter for clemency. Shuckburgh, who received Weizmann that same day, reported that the Zionist chief said “he hardly felt able to make any specific appeal in this matter, but that he wished me to know that the telegram had been received.” The Deputy Under Secretary replied that MacDonald’s attitude was that he could not intervene in these cases.⁴⁵

While the Irgun attacked Arabs near Tel Aviv, Jaffa, and Haifa, Haining’s judgment stirred the yishuv to unprecedented demonstrations. Leftist “Red” Haifa led the way on the evening of June 25, with protesters carrying signs against *havlaga* and Arab terror. Hundreds clashed with armed policemen on June 26 in Tel Aviv; Moshe Avigdor Amiel, the city’s Ashkenazi chief rabbi, assured a mass gathering that Eretz Israel would rise by virtue of those prepared to die on its behalf. In the next days, thousands in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem confronted the British authorities, who also turned down a rabbinical request to delay the date of execution because it coincided with the Jewish holiday of the new Hebrew month of Tammuz. Injuries, arrests, and curfews were commonplace. Newspaper editorials united in calls for clemency; theatres and coffee houses spontaneously closed throughout the country. Herzog, accompanied by two rabbis of the ultra-Orthodox Agudas Israel, met with MacMichael, who responded that he could “only act in accordance with the advice of the Military Courts.”⁴⁶

Protests erupted throughout the Jewish world, a rally in Warsaw on the afternoon of June 26 most noteworthy. Addressing the thousands, especially workers, gathered to express their pain and fury, Uri Zvi Greenberg lashed out against the “humiliation” of *havlaga*. Linking Ben-Yosef, Schein, and Zuravin to Yosef Lishanski and Na’aman Belkind, two Jewish youngsters of the small, independent NILI group who had been hanged by the Turks for espionage activity during World War I, the Revisionist poet asserted that Jews everywhere opposed the “dead Mapai” party and embraced the condemned Betari. Recalling the Labor author Yosef Brenner’s praise of those who in later years emulated Trumpeldor’s ultimate sacrifice when he defended Tel-Hai in the Upper Galilee against Arab Bedouin attack in 1920, the speaker lauded all who stood “in the shadow of the hangman’s noose, with Jewry at their feet.” Addressing Ben-Yosef, he declaimed that a day would come when the mothers of Israel will sing praises to the woman who gave birth to you, while the assembled today praise those who stand in the shadow of your hanging. His gallows in Akko prison, Greenberg concluded, had become

a burning bush that “will illuminate the path of the Jewish nation, of the ruffian Palestinian Jewish youth – the path to national freedom.”⁴⁷

The hitherto anonymous prisoner, bearing number 3118 on his red clothes in the Akko jail, continued to maintain a steely resolve. “I do not think myself worthy for this great honor, to be the first Jew to be hanged in Eretz Israel by the government after two thousand years,” he told Yunitichman soon after Haining’s judgment became public knowledge: “I take pride that this first Jew is a Betari, and that I am that Betari.” Certain that “tens, hundreds, perhaps thousands” would follow him in the war for Jewish independence, Ben-Yosef did not expect, nor desire, a pardon. The British would see how this Betari, “of more value in his death than in his life,” went to the gallows. He appreciated, from newspapers accounts received, that Diaspora Jewry understood his stance, and he ruled out a possible rescue attempt on the grounds that Jews would be accused of fleeing the gallows out of fear. To other Betar visitors, Ben-Yosef averred that his death would be “the sign for war”; the Betar hymn and Jabotinsky’s name would be on his lips at the end. Jottings in a firm hand, written on his cell wall, in books, and on pieces of paper, reflected Ben-Yosef’s mind: “Death versus homeland is nought”; “I was a servant to Betar until the day of my death”; “What is a homeland? It is something for which it is worthwhile to live, to fight, and also to die.”⁴⁸

On June 28, the Va’ad HaLeumi, calling a special conference of Jewish Agency representatives, mayors, local councils, and the country’s Ashkenazi and Sephardi chief rabbis, took up Ben-Yosef’s plight as a second topic under the category “the security situation.” Following a lengthy discussion of Austrian Jewry’s grim condition under the recent German annexation, Shertok and Ben-Zvi explained the Zionist establishment’s role since the events of April 21. While outlining the steps taken to save Ben-Yosef, both leaders opposed all demonstrations that jeopardized any chance for clemency. Vashitz defended the NZO’s refusal to back a statement favoring *havlaga*, a “worthless doctrine” which he believed gave “ammunition to the enemy,” but this was a lone voice. Ben-Gurion, who had recently vetoed Tel Aviv mayor Israel Rokah’s request to proclaim a strike, spoke for those assembled: political pressure endangered Ben-Yosef’s life, and threatened the hope for needed British measures in the future against Arab terrorism. Accordingly, the Va’ad HaLeumi and chief rabbinate issued a joint proclamation urging “communal quiet, not to be drawn into actions that would likely raise tempestuous winds and aggravate the situation in the yishuv.” All were required in this “grave hour,” ended the manifesto, to distance themselves from every unauthorized

outbreak, demonstrations, strikes, and anything that would likely endanger the yishuv's security.⁴⁹

That same day, Ben-Yosef received more than forty visitors, assuring them that his way "led to redemption." Pointing out his writing on the cell wall the Betar phrase "to die or to conquer the mountain," he prophesied to some comrades: "I will die and you will conquer." Palestinian Jewish youth will know that a homeland is only achieved with "blood and war." The last group, coming at sunset, heard Ben-Yosef's certainty that a day would come when their names will be recorded in the first pages of "our blood-soaked history." He had known from the outset of the mission what fate awaited him, but he would not embarrass Betar at the gallows. "National sensitivity" alone motivated his actions, and if he would serve as a small example in Jewry's struggle for independence, that would be his comfort. "Transmit to the head of Betar [Jabotinsky] that I already completed my war," he concluded, "but he must continue until victory."⁵⁰

Before being moved that same evening to the death cell, Ben-Yosef addressed his last communication to Jabotinsky, beginning with the traditional Betar salute "Tel- Hai!" Having the "great honor" to declare that tomorrow he would fulfill his "holy and last task" as a Betar conscript in Eretz Israel, Ben-Yosef felt "privileged" to fulfill this duty "blissfully", the result of his attempt to walk in the "iron path" taught by his mentors. He was proud that he had the honor to sacrifice himself for "our lofty ideal." Do not be sad, the letter continued, because he knew that Jabotinsky worried over every Betari as a father for his children. "Natural things" could not be prevented. Ben-Yosef gave his last promise that he would go to the gallows with head raised as a Betari, and would die with Jabotinsky's name, "so dear to me," on his lips. "Go forth," he went on, with your "valiant youth," because only you are the individual who can "redeem our persecuted nation." And he ended: "I wish that you have the privilege of seeing 'the Jewish State on both sides of the Jordan' in the near future.... And I clasp your hand. Long life to you. Tel-Hai. From a Betari who has the honor to die for his homeland. Shlomo Ben Yosef."⁵¹

Failing to gain King George V's intervention, Jabotinsky made a last appeal for an interview with MacDonald, who received him on the afternoon of June 28. Pleading "eloquently," the young Secretary of State later noted, Jabotinsky also cautioned that Ben-Yosef would become a "martyr" who would influence "many more" Jews in Palestine. In reply, while stressing that he had no power to intervene in the case, MacDonald expressed agreement with Haining's judgment, as well as his own concern that commutation of

the death sentence would encourage other Palestinian Jews to break the law. Jabotinsky's additional efforts to sway him proved fruitless, MacDonald declaring that he had made up his mind "definitely and finally." "Then my case is lost," Jabotinsky remarked, and the British official replied, "I am afraid it is." The NZO tribune departed with the statement that "this action might be the beginning of an extremely deep and wide breach between the Jewish and the British peoples." He immediately sent off a coded message to the Irgun: "If final invest heavily." The secret communication conveyed that if the execution did take place, a more aggressive response from the underground group should occur.⁵²

At 9 p.m., hearing from Philip Joseph that a confirmed military court sentence during the Boer War had been granted a hearing by the Privy Council in Britain, Jabotinsky and Labor Member of Parliament Josiah Wedgwood began searching in the House of Commons library for the South African record. At Jabotinsky's request, Major Harry L. Nathan, a well-known lawyer and Labor M.P., approached MacDonald over the matter. In response, he was told that such questions should have been considered much earlier; the Privy Council only dealt with narrowly defined criminal appeals; and a last-moment stay of execution would be "destructive of organized administration and contrary to public policy both from the administrative point of view and, indeed, very likely from the interests of the convict himself." While Nathan finally said that he would not press his request, MacDonald cabled a "most immediate" telegram at 10:40 p.m. to MacMichael, warning him to "stand by" while the Colonial Office explored the possibility of postponement. At 12:45 a.m. on June 29, a terse, coded message from MacDonald reached the High Commissioner: "I have considered matter further and there is no occasion to postpone execution."⁵³

Shortly thereafter, Robert Briscoe, the first Jewish member of Ireland's parliament and a fervent NZO acolyte, informed Jabotinsky that a case similar to that which had arisen in South Africa took place subsequently during the Irish Rebellion. Nathan at once began a search in the House of Commons library, without success. On a hunch, he then proceeded with Jabotinsky to the High Court. Searching by candlelight, they eventually located the document in a dark vault, and called MacDonald's private secretary to alert MacDonald. The bachelor Secretary of State could not be located, however, his whereabouts unknown. With nowhere else to turn, the group dispersed. After reporting to his executive, Jabotinsky went home but did not retire to bed. For the first time in her life, his wife Joanna saw him crying. The hour

in London had struck 5 a.m., time for Ben-Yosef's scheduled hanging in Palestine.⁵⁴

Ben-Yosef had awakened early that morning from a deep, quiet sleep. He drank a cup of tea, and agreed to a Jewish prison official's suggestion that reciting *Psalms* together would suffice in place of the traditional Jewish confession, since the authorities had refused to permit a rabbi entry for this purpose. Prison officials also rejected Ben-Yosef's request to bid farewell to Schein and Zuravin, as well as his wish to wear the Betar uniform, claiming that such "military" attire was forbidden. At 7 a.m., he washed, drank another cup of tea, combed his hair, and brushed his teeth. When a British sergeant entered the death cell one hour later, a smiling, slightly pale Ben-Yosef placed his arm on the official's shoulders. Proceeding resolutely to the gallows chamber nearby, he sang Betar songs all the way. As a black hood covered his face, he stood at attention, cried "Long live Jabotinsky!" and "Tel-Hai!" and extended his neck to the hangman.⁵⁵

At 9 a.m. on June 29, 1938, Yunitchman led five Betarim in escorting the lifeless Ben-Yosef, a smile yet visible on his calm face, to Rosh Pina under heavy British guard. For a few hours, people came to the synagogue to pay their respects before the body, laid on a stretcher covered with a gray prison blanket. It then took from 2 to 4 p.m. for a cavity to be dug in the hard rock of the nearby cemetery, after which eulogists linked Ben-Yosef to Trumpeldor and pledged that many Hebrew youth would inherit the Betari's mantle. Rosenfeld praised Ben-Yosef as a descendant of the Maccabees and the Galileans who had revolted against foreign domination, and a hero from whose grave those present would derive the "strength, courage, patience, and pride" to achieve his longed-for dream: a free Jewish state. Yunitchman excoriated Britain's "abusive" treatment to the last, refusing the condemned man an Orthodox Jewish confession and his sixty-year-old mother's wish that execution be delayed until she could reach Palestine to bless him one last time. The yishuv would "not forget nor forgive!" he ended, and Betarim would emerge knowing how to die in like manner. After Yunitchman covered the body with a Betar shirt, cap and merit badge, the shrouded form was lowered into the ground. The Betar hymn, Stern's "*Hayalim Almonim*" (Anonymous Soldiers), and the Zionist anthem, "*HaTikva*", were all sung, after which the crowd silently took its leave. Thus the curtain fell on a committed, short life.⁵⁶

III

Jabotinsky quickly accorded Ben-Yosef legendary status. In a telegram the same day to the NZO in Eretz Israel, he proclaimed that the deceased had turned into "a source of faith and fortitude for our movement and for Palestinian Jewish youth." Our grief is mixed with pride that this Betari knew how to ascend to the gallows with a courage that has no equal, he went on, and the gallows will henceforth symbolize the stubbornness of our movement until "the complete victory." In a letter to Ben-Yosef's mother, Jabotinsky stated in Yiddish that he was not worthy to have his own name uttered by the youngster at the time of death; Ben-Yosef's name would be in his heart as long as he lived, and "those who are his disciples more than mine will be the trailblazers for the generation." Writing to Yunitchman and Rosenfeld when the traditional seventh day of mourning arrived, Jabotinsky's panegyric reached a climax: Betar, not he, had educated Ben-Yosef, who represented the quintessential nature of the Betar spirit and truth. If only the exiled writer could bow at his gravesite together with you. "From his gallows," the NZO president concluded, "a tower had been formed, from his grave – a temple, from his memory – a civil religion."⁵⁷

The Irgun reversed its earlier dismissal of the April 21st incident, now dubbing Ben-Yosef "the national hero" and "a symbol for fighting Palestinian Jewish youth." Having Jabotinsky's confidential approval for escalated operations if the hanging occurred, Yosef Katznelson and Binyamin Lubotski (later Eliav) of the NZO met with Raziel and Stern to discuss for the first time if attacks should commence against the mandatory authorities. Lubotski argued that the Irgun should create an atmosphere whereby no British policeman would dare to appear in the streets of Tel Aviv. The majority ruled against him. Instead, assaults were soon launched against Arabs in Haifa, Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and Jaffa. The Irgun helm passed to Raziel, who publicly praised Ben-Yosef as "the first sacrifice in the Hebrew war for independence," "our comrade" who "did not know how to fight but did know how to die with glorious courage and in the faith of his final victory." Rather than seeing him as one hanged incidentally, the Irgun now portrayed Ben-Yosef as having "entered on the steps of the gallows the honored temple of the fighters for freedom in Israel and in the nations, who in death conquered liberty for their generations."⁵⁸

United as never before in grief and anger, the yishuv spontaneously

closed shops and places of amusement on the day of Ben-Yosef's hanging. Black bunting framed the Zionist flag in Haifa, Ramat Gan, Petah Tikva, Netanya, Hedera, Rehovot, Magdiel, Ekron, Tsfat, and Tverya. Thousands marched through Tel Aviv; almost fifty were injured by police. Ultra-Orthodox students in Jerusalem's Geula quarter gathered to hoot at the British authorities; the country's Agudas Israel headquarters linked Ben-Yosef with other martyrs who had died defending the Palestinian Jewish community. Amiel even connected the deceased to the Mashiah Ben-Yosef, who mystics had long believed would be killed prior to the arrival of the true Messiah, descendant of the biblical King David. Rokah ably reflected the prevailing consensus when praising "our holy brother" Ben-Yosef, who wished to show that "the time had come to end the spilling of innocent Jewish blood." His "pure soul," Tel Aviv's mayor concluded his eulogy before a massive memorial gathering, would forever be remembered for having died on behalf of "the sanctification of God's name and the love of the nation and the homeland."⁵⁹

Leading yishuv newspapers roundly denounced the hanging of the "*kadosh*" (traditional Jewish holy martyr). *HaTsofeh*, the religious-Zionist daily, charged Britain with murder, questioned the wisdom of *havlaga* in the future, and announced that "the eternity of Israel would never be vanquished." Others did not go that far, which got *HaTsofeh* suspended by the British press censor for one week, but *HaBoker* asserted that what had transpired in Acre destroyed Jewish faith in British justice. The *Palestine Post*, like the editors of the London *Jewish Chronicle*, some Jewish dailies in Warsaw, and New York City's *Der Tog*, deemed the execution a tragic blunder. While opposing the action of April 21 and hoping that Ben-Yosef's associates would not seek revenge, veteran editor Ben-Zion Katz acknowledged in *Hadashot* that His Majesty's Government had soiled England's name in the world and in history for generations to come.⁶⁰

Other voices, particularly the dominant Labor faction, took a sharply different tack. The Histadrut organization in Jerusalem and in Tel Aviv charged the Revisionists with thwarting efforts by the Jewish Agency and the Va'ad HaLeumi to help Ben-Yosef, notably Jabotinsky's refusal to sign a declaration against revenge and demonstrations by "ruffians", which damaged any hopes for clemency, their motive to attain a martyr for the political Right. In the Emek Yizrael region, *halutzim* (agricultural pioneers) purposely worked as usual on the day that Ben-Yosef was laid to rest. *Davar's* editors, who already on April 26 had written of the possibility of "a stab in the back" of the yishuv by Jewish "bacteria," now cautioned their readers not to permit

the “madness of ruffians” and “criminals” to raise Ben-Yosef to the status of hero and martyr. *HaAretz* added its view that he had fallen victim both to the feeling that Jewish blood was forfeit and to the “invalid and distorted” education of Rosh Pina’s Betar. Fearing “poisonous provocation” against the yishuv’s “iron discipline,” editor Moshe Glickson pointed to Ben-Yosef as the first sacrifice of the “crazy, evil spirit” reflected in the Irgun’s subsequent attacks on blameless civilians.⁶¹

Ben-Gurion proved the most uncompromising, even breaking with eminent Labor colleagues like Berl Katznelson, Yosef Sprinzak, and David Remez in asserting that the execution day was one of “disgrace” for the yishuv, not one of mourning. He insisted that the black flag above Histadrut headquarters in Tel Aviv be taken down, allowing only the Zionist standard and the red banner of the world proletariat, the two regularly aloft that building. To the Mapai central committee he confessed his shame that a Jew had tried to kill innocent human beings. In vilification identical to that which he had hurled against Revisionists and Brit HaBiryonom members accused of murdering Jewish Agency political director Haim Arlosoroff five years earlier, Ben-Gurion asserted that the hanging was actually caused by the Revisionist “Nazi party” With no end to the Arab Revolt in sight, he greatly worried that “we stood before a real civil war, and it was impossible that criminal bands within us commit despicable acts and other good people will desire to justify these actions that are done as if from a Zionist ideal.” The yishuv could not afford to lose crucial British military help and public opinion, he urged. For these combined reasons, its “responsible” bodies had to condemn terror unequivocally and embrace *havlaga*. On July 7, the central committee endorsed Ben-Gurion’s position fully.⁶²

Three days earlier, Weizmann had presented the WZO’s stance in a second private meeting with MacDonald. So far as Jews were responsible for shootings and bombings that had just taken place in Palestine, it was the work of the Revisionists, who would “exploit” Ben-Yosef’s hanging “for further outrages.” Approval of the Jewish State in a partitioned Palestine would “very greatly weaken” Revisionist influence, Weizmann stressed. The British could sway important Arab rulers, such as the Saudi Arabian monarch Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud, to back partition; abandoning it would leave the Jews “completely disillusioned regarding the reliability of Britain,” while Jewish “extremists” would come to power in Palestine. Rejecting outright MacDonald’s ideas for an Arab-Jewish conference or, alternatively, a negotiated settlement which could bring the Jews to 40 percent of the population over a ten-year period,

the WZO president insisted that establishing a Jewish commonwealth would create the “certainty” of a new and powerful friend in the Near East,” whereas the British “were only taking a risk of alienating the Arab peoples.” (Soon thereafter, MacDonald informed the cabinet that the decision regarding Ben-Yosef had been “most carefully considered both in Palestine and at home and there has been no escape from a capital sentence.” His listeners raised no objection.)⁶³

Weizmann also advised Shertok to consider Haining a “staunch friend” of the Zionist cause. “For once,” he stressed, “we have found one responsible person who is prepared to be helpful.” A personal communication from Weizmann to the G.O.C. followed, noting that “we have all been thinking much of you, and realizing the difficulties which you have been facing these past few weeks.” Soon Shertok told Jewish Agency colleagues, in language which he would repeat to Haining during their next meeting, that he understood the G.O.C. was “only fulfilling his duty.” The Agency, Shertok added to the mandatory’s Chief Secretary, would do everything to “prevent the repetition” of criminal attacks on Arab civilians, and would cooperate to the fullest in supplying men for legal defense forces.⁶⁴

In sharp contrast, Jabotinsky excoriated His Majesty’s Government for executing Ben-Yosef on “the ground of expediency,” to teach Jews a lesson, rather than to dispense justice. The hanging raised doubts whether the Anglo-Jewish partnership could survive in the face of such treatment, he told a mass memorial meeting in London on July 6. “I tell the British be careful,” since Jews are beginning to wonder whether Ben-Yosef’s path was the best: “It has happened before in history that the martyr became a prophet and graves became shrines.” And he concluded with a peroration: “Those in high quarters are weighing up in their minds whether the Jewish youth are dust or whether they are iron. The hangmen of Ben-Yosef think it is dust. We shall see.” Wedgwood, whose letter advocating a Jewish civil revolt in Palestine the Irgun quickly translated and plastered across the country two months earlier, added to the audience his conviction that an Englishman in Ben-Yosef’s place would have done the same; moreover, the Betar martyr’s “admirable” facing of death “must evoke pride in Jewry.”⁶⁵

This alternative reading of the yishuv’s current pulse received confirmation in a second secret gathering in Jerusalem of the Va’ad HaLeumi and the country’s local representatives on July 10. While those present ruled out acts of indiscriminate revenge, such as the deadly placing of explosives by the Irgun four days earlier in Haifa’s Arab market, they also refused to accept the

Zionist establishment's *havlaga* stance unconditionally in light of widespread, rising Arab terrorism. Unlike the earlier meeting of June 28, ambiguity now reigned: criticism of Jewish responses did not translate into a unanimous condemnation of the Revisionists or of the Irgun, as Ben-Gurion, Ben-Zvi, and Shertok sought. Rather, a marked number of speakers objected to the ostracism of the Right, and demanded that efforts be made to find a *modus vivendi* between all parties in this critical hour. Statements two days earlier of the Va'ad HaLeumi and the country's chief rabbinate in favor of self-restraint notwithstanding, no joint declaration emerged against what Ben-Gurion called "false patriotic demagoguery." With Ben-Yosef's death hovering over the discussion, a clear majority pressed for the creation of a committee to unite the yishuv.⁶⁶

No such group came into being, but a meeting between Hagana commander Eliyahu Golomb and Jabotinsky the same day suggested a step in that direction. Wanting to preserve the Hagana's expansion as a legal force in Britain's fight against the Arab Revolt, Golomb searched for a joint agreement on future underground operations with the Irgun in order to avoid civil war. That last phrase Jabotinsky took as a threat against the NZO and Irgun in Palestine, to which he warned that Revisionists in Poland and elsewhere could then retaliate against the Left. He claimed not to be able to control those of his camp who carried out revenge attacks against the Palestinian-Arab population, but noted that Ben-Yosef's death had made an impression on all youth elements within the yishuv. To his suggestion for a Zionist round-table conference to discuss this and other issues, Golomb countered with the need to fashion a Jewish army together in this "time of war." The worried Hagana commander concluded to his superiors that since Jabotinsky apparently hoped to use "the rite" of Ben-Yosef to sow "confusion and division" within our youth, the NZO chief would continue retaliation against Arabs without being dissuaded from all the results. And indeed, speaking in Warsaw's New Theatre five days later, Jabotinsky deemed the breaking of *havlaga* in Palestine "essential."⁶⁷

The WZO-Hagana's preeminent strength in Palestine and his own inability to influence developments there, including numerous arrests of Revisionists and Betarim, tied Jabotinsky's hands. Writing to Klausner "from the depths," he bemoaned the steady "disintegration" of Zionist officialdom's political stances, confessed his weariness, and saw "darkness and boredom" everywhere. He did not persuade a Warsaw press conference in mid-August when repeating what he perceived as Golomb's threat of an armed pogrom by

the Left against the Right. Stern, then operating in Poland to raise weapons for the Irgun without Jabotinsky's knowledge, was greatly disheartened to hear the NZO leader tell him that the Revisionists lacked the power and the funds to respond to Hagana attacks against its members. Jabotinsky even suggested that the Irgun should halt activities, so that it could recoup before renewing operations. He also emphasized to the NZO in Palestine that it remain a legal body, carrying no responsibility for "illegal incidents." Having been shunted into a corner and with "little sense in going on making gestures," Jabotinsky wrote to associate Shlomo Y. Jacobi in London, we should tell this plainly to "those concerned" (the Irgun command). He even considered resigning the NZO presidency, settling somewhere near London, and writing novels.⁶⁸

Into this breach stepped Yunitchman, who contacted the Jewish Agency's Eliyahu Dobkin and Shertok with an eye to some understanding between the opposing political camps. This in turn led to his meeting on August 30 with Golomb, at which Haim Lubinski represented the Irgun. The get-together proved inconclusive, but after five additional sessions, an agreement was signed on September 19 in Rokah's home. The Hagana and Irgun would remain separate bodies, with two members from each to agree on joint activity. Raziell praised the document to Stern, but difficulties arose when news of the agreement reached Ben-Gurion in London. He rushed a curt telegram informing Golomb that if he signed, Ben-Gurion would be forced to resign from the Jewish Agency Executive. Jabotinsky gave his approval to the document, much to the satisfaction of Golomb, Berl Katznelson and Shertok, yet Ben-Gurion refused to budge. When the Revisionist *HaYarden* published some of his secret cables to Golomb, and Jacobi's correspondence with Ben-Gurion indicated that the NZO still refused to rejoin the Zionist movement, the Agency chairman delighted that the projected agreement with his arch rivals had come to naught.⁶⁹

Jabotinsky tried to stem the Irgun's growing radicalism, seeking to persuade the third Betar world conference in September that his youth cadres must become "the backbone of the Jewish liberation movement." Emphasizing Ben-Yosef's heroic insistence on "*tekes*" (ceremony) before confronting the hangman, he lauded the Betari's fulfillment of Jabotinsky's order – given now post-facto – for the mission, and hoped that the grieving delegates would be worthy of this "exalted tragedy." The eloquent charge did not sit well with twenty-five-year-old Menahem Begin, a prominent Betar commander in Poland who, thoroughly identifying with Ahimeir's stress on an actual war for independence, praised Ben-Yosef's example and obliquely

challenged Jabotinsky's staunch reliance on "the world's conscience" and on political negotiations. British intransigence in Palestine, coupled two months earlier at the Evian Conference with the world's bolting of doors to Jewish refugees, demanded, in Begin's view, that "military Zionism" along the examples of fighters Garibaldi and De Valera become the Betar rallying cry.

Jabotinsky dismissed Begin's well-received speech as unrealistic "chatter," the valueless "creaking of a door," but Israel Sheib (later Eldad) welcomed this "creaking" as a warning signal that the "thieves of surrender and opportunism" had stolen into the national Zionist movement. Rather than admiring Ben-Yosef's "ceremonious" brushing of his hair and teeth before death, this youngster declared that his generation focused on British brutality, and could not just stand at attention before the deceased's glorious example. Ultimately, the world conference voted down a resolution from Stern associate Uriel Halpern (later Yonatan Ratosh) declaring the Jewish state an immediately achievable aim and the conclusion mandated by Ben-Yosef's example, against Jabotinsky's principle that the Jews had to constitute a majority in Eretz Israel first; it did approve Begin's proposal that the words in the Betar vow "I will turn my hand only in defense" be supplemented by "and to conquer my land." Jabotinsky also altered his 1937 poem "Kula Sheli" (It is All Mine) to call twice for revolt and highlight the gallows, as well as to claim that Betar was "divinely chosen to rule." The tension within the Revisionist camp remained, however, and Stern's followers continued to infiltrate Betar cells.⁷⁰

Concurrently, His Majesty's Government decided that the Arab world must be appeased on Palestine, lest it join Britain's enemies in the event of probable world war. A sizeable force of some 160,000 troops, joined by Hagana members in the Special Night Squads of Captain Charles Orde Wingate and Arab "peace bands" who opposed the terrorist campaign, had weakened considerably the Arab Revolt's strength that fall. After Ben-Yosef's execution, the Foreign Office resolved to pressure countries against sanctioning "illegal" Jewish immigration towards the biblically Promised Land, aiming first at the individual (Moshe Krivoshein-Galili) who had brought Ben-Yosef's group there. At the end of September, Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain signed the Munich Agreement with Hitler, forcing Czechoslovakia to cede the Sudetenland, in the hope of averting war. Two weeks later, MacDonald confided in Weizmann that London would retreat from its partition proposal, holding instead (as he had suggested in their meeting of July 4) an Arab-Jewish conference on the Palestine question. This reversal officially took place on November 9, with an announcement inviting

Jewish and Arab leaders, including from the states surrounding Palestine, to a Round Table Conference in London. That same evening, Hitler unleashed the “night of shattered glass” in Germany and Austria, a savage pogrom which ended any remaining illusions for Jewish life under the swastika.⁷¹

With no agreement reached at London’s St. James Palace Conference, the Arabs refusing even to sit at the same table with the Jews, MacDonald issued a White Paper on May 17 that limited Jewish immigration to Palestine to 75,000 for the next five years. (Arab consent would be required thereafter.) The sale of land to Jews was to be severely restricted, and within ten years an independent Palestine state could arise having strong links to Britain. Two weeks earlier, Greenberg had linked Ben-Yosef and Zvi Garfinkel, who had drowned while seeking to find a safe landing spot near Ashkelon for the “illegal” ship *Aghia Zoni*, as “wondrous specks in the darkness of surrender” that marked the ruling Zionist parties. In light of the White Paper, Jabotinsky now sent his approval and blessings to those (of the Irgun) who broke the *havlaga* against Britain, successors of militant heroes from the Bible to “Ben-Yosef and his brothers”: “My children in Eretz Israel “write” better than I do, more clearly, more succinctly.” Yet he continued to caution Raziell against retaliatory acts that endangered women, children, and the elderly, attacks which also drew the ire of the Left and others who pilloried Revisionists “insane on revenge!” Jabotinsky also requested MacDonald to have the Palestine government grant immigration certificates to Ben-Yosef’s mother and her family, the NZO to assume full responsibility for her care in Rosh Pina. No answer was ever received.⁷²

All the while, the Right kept alive and even elevated Ben-Yosef’s significance. Pamphlets in 1939 marking the anniversary of the death of Trumpeldor, a hero claimed by both contending political factions, asserted that Ben-Yosef had given Betar its new call: “to die or to conquer the mountain.” A series of essays by Yeivin, declaring that the new hero “actively sacrificed himself under an explicit flag” and therefore “opened the book of Israeli independence,” saw print as *The Triumph of Shlomo Ben-Yosef*. Early verses by Hanokh Kalei, David Frankel, and Shlomo Skolsky about the young man who ignited “the fire of revolt” were succeeded by Greenberg’s mystical vision of a revived Ben-Yosef conquering hearts across Eretz Israel. *HaYarden* devoted an entire issue to commemorate the first anniversary of the hanging. Arrested by the British, Raziell and other Irgunists conducted a lengthy memorial service for Ben-Yosef in their Akko cell.⁷³

Having gathered documentation and initial chapters authored by

Yeivin about Ben-Yosef's life, editor Rosenfeld got the materials transferred to Warsaw, where it was decided to publish a booklet in Hebrew, Yiddish, and Polish. Jabotinsky's essay therein hailed "my teacher" who revealed the bankruptcy of *havlaga*, sanctified the gallows, and personified Betar's motto of "*hadar*" (outer and inner splendor). Insisting in an introduction that the cause of national freedom far outweighed life itself, "each mountain conquered with the strength of sacrifice," Raziell demanded on behalf of "those who are about to die" that the booklet's readers rise to fight for inevitable victory. One Hebrew copy of the manuscript reached Palestine in August, and was published secretly with a false Geneva stamp under the title *Sefer Shlomo Ben-Yosef*. All others were destroyed in the ensuing global conflict, which Jabotinsky doubted would erupt, once German troops invaded Poland on September 1, 1939.⁷⁴

During and after World War II, vying right-wing groups evoked Ben-Yosef as the model of militant Zionist sacrifice. After the deaths of Jabotinsky (1940) and Raziell (1941), his image rose in Betar's veneration; the Hebrew date of his death, 30 Sivan, drew an honor guard to the Rosh Pina cemetery each year. LEHI, formed separately by Stern in 1940 once both the Hagana and the Irgun had agreed on a truce with Great Britain during the war, portrayed Ben-Yosef as a rebel who followed his "national conscience." LEHI's killing in January 1942 of Ben-Yosef's British hangman was portrayed as striding in the Betari's path; three years later, spokesmen trumpeted as the next stage for national freedom the hanging of LEHI members Eliyahu Bet-Zouri and Eliyahu Hakim, inspired by Ben-Yosef's example, who murdered British Minister-Resident Lord Moyne in Cairo and then used their trial as a political platform. The Irgun, which launched a revolt in February 1944 against the British once Begin became its top commander, embraced Ben-Yosef for having "opened the page of rebellion" against His Majesty's Government and the Jewish Agency. The nine others who were condemned to the British noose from V-E Day until the State of Israel's creation, all from Irgun and LEHI ranks, fused in these right-wing circles with a broader mythos: Ben-Yosef and his lofty successors had picked up the torch of the Palestinian-Jewish martyrs who joined Bar Kokhba in revolt against Roman rule.⁷⁵

In the decade following Israel's creation, Begin and his new Herut Party attempted to re-cast Ben-Yosef and others of their heroes in the national mold. Hampered by the early decision of Ben-Gurion and the reigning Labor government coalition not to have pre-state "dissidents" of the Right enter the

military pantheon, Begin opened a struggle for the collective memory. Proud to tell a Soviet N.K.V.D. interrogator in September 1940 that Ben-Yosef symbolized Betarim who were prepared to die for their beliefs, the Herut opposition leader marked the thirteenth anniversary of Ben-Yosef's death by unveiling a plaque in the Akko gallows room to the memory of the eight hanged there. He prayed that the Jewish nation, with God's help, would be worthy of their "holy sacrifice," with the world to know that "Hebrew rule will never pass from this land." Herut subsidized Yosef Nedava's book about all those Jews who ascended the British gallows, Begin's introduction lauding their constant "courage of initiative." It also challenged the state's insistence upon altering the name in Ben-Yosef's honor of their Upper Galilee settlement, "Nahalat Shlomo," to "Hosen." To coincide with the Hebrew anniversary of Razi'el's death, selected as the annual memorial day for heroes of the Irgun, a delegation paid its respects as well to Ben-Yosef's gravesite in 1957; he received Irgun "soldier" status that same May.⁷⁶

In the late afternoon of July 6, 1959, faithful supporters of the Right gathered to unveil a monument to Ben-Yosef on the Rosh Pina-Tsfat highway. A crowd of some 3,000, including 500 Betarim in full uniform and a sizeable Druze delegation from nearby villages, stood at attention as the Israeli, Betar, and Irgun flags entered the area. Tears were shed when Ben-Yosef's last letters were read and the Betar hymn sung. Begin spoke of the "spirit of steel" of this hero, the first holy martyr in "the last generation of bondage and the first in the beginning of redemption," and of his successors – all members of the ideological family fathered by Jabotinsky. Yunitzman averred that Ben-Yosef had "vanquished death and entered eternity," transforming a red prison uniform into the purple of royalty, and he expressed the certainty that a state military contingent would one day honor his pupil's gravesite. Schein (now called Amikam) and Zuravin unveiled a sculpture by Yitshak Danziger which one reviewer interpreted as symbolizing an angry arm thrust heavenward. Chief Sephardi Rabbi Yitshak Nissim spoke for many of Israel's Jews when, regretting his absence at the dedication, he extolled Ben-Yosef for having "taught and forged a generation of fighters" who emulated him with "glory and valor." The entry of Ben-Yosef to the national pantheon appeared close at hand.⁷⁷

Ben-Gurion's government thought otherwise, however. Akko fortress, where a small plaque was placed in 1961 to mark the cells occupied by Jabotinsky (1920) and by Ben-Yosef, served as a state psychiatric hospital ever since Israel's sovereign rebirth. Yitshak Gurion, a former Brit HaBiryonom

member and one of the six Betarim who had escorted the body of Ben-Yosef from Akko to Rosh Pina, wrote to Minister of Posts Eliyahu Sasson requesting a commemorative stamp on the twenty-fifth anniversary of Ben-Yosef's death. "We refrain from publicly presenting subjects that include tragedies like death," came the reply, "and try to immortalize subjects that have a positive character, such as centennial anniversaries of known individuals." Stamps authorized to date that did touch on tragedy related to the theme of Jewish resistance during the Holocaust, Sasson added, not to individuals *per se*. Yet those who ascended the gallows against British rule did not see their fate as tragic, Gurion responded in turn, and he requested a government decision. Ultimately, the matter never reached discussion before the cabinet, Sasson informing Gurion in November 1962 that a precedent could not be set. In the end, a special postmark appeared on letters in the country's three largest cities, and in Rosh Pina and Tsfat on the anniversary of Ben-Yosef's hanging.⁷⁸

The sudden departure from the prime ministership in mid-June 1963 of Ben-Gurion, who would continue to disparage Ben-Yosef's action and to brand those of other Jews who died at the mandatory noose – even for a "lofty objective" – as murder, signaled a change.⁷⁹ Two weeks later, to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of Ben-Yosef's hanging, Begin broadcast on Israeli radio a lavish tribute to him and fellow gallows victims, "in whose courageous sacrifice Israel arose." When Herut members in parliament criticized the state's subsidy of a Hagana history that denigrated Jabotinsky, Ben-Yosef, and the Irgun, Prime Minister Levi Eshkol agreed that future volumes would be prepared under private auspices. Reversing his predecessor, Eshkol also approved the transfer of Jabotinsky's remains to Israel, where they received full honors and burial near Theodor Herzl, the founder of political Zionism. In 1968, cabinet member Begin represented the government in Rehovot on the country's Memorial Day, where he saluted those who ascended the gallows and all others who fell while fighting for Israel. The next day, the Israel Defense Forces recognized Ben-Yosef for the first time as "a slain soldier of the nation," with Begin leading a state delegation to the Rosh Pina gravesite, at which the traditional Kaddish prayer was said and three honor rifle volleys sounded.⁸⁰

Ben-Yosef's image as a national hero still lacked finality. Books exalting Ben-Yosef's valor by Haim Lazar (1962), Yitshak Gurion (1963), David Niv (1965), and Ya'akov Vinshal (1968) came out under Herut, not state, sponsorship, Begin taking such opportunities to depict him as the first

exemplary “pillar of fire” of a select group whose victories, even if hidden, proved “decisive for their nation’s freedom and its honor.” Gurion failed with his appeal in January 1967 to have the Israeli Post Office issue a series of stamps in memory of the twelve Palestinian Jews hanged under foreign rule, which would also inspire the country’s youth greatly needing “to absorb a heritage of bravery and love of the homeland.” Notwithstanding his observation that American Revolutionary hero Nathan Hale received such recognition in the United States and that France had already issued twenty-seven stamps honoring those who died in the anti-German Resistance during World War II, a department official replied that Gurion would have to resubmit the request in order to make the proper deadline a few months hence. There the matter came to a close.⁸¹

A further step toward iconic status came on June 24, 1973, when Ben-Yosef’s name was assigned to a new street in Jerusalem, the nation’s expanding capital. Ramat Gan had accorded this honor to Ben-Yosef in 1939, and in 1962 Jerusalem authorities had named streets for two Jews who committed suicide together in the local mandatory prison before their scheduled hangings in 1947. This proposal, first advanced by lawyer Gershon Solomon, included individual streets for Ben-Yosef and the nine others who had ascended to British gallows in Akko and Cairo, as well as for the two Nili members hanged by the Turks in 1917. B.Z. Luria and Mayor Teddy Kollek preferred one major street generically labeled “Olei HaGardom” (those who ascended the gallows) and a separate tablet nearby listing their names, arguing that the state’s Ministry of Defense policy did not bestow upon streets the names of individuals who had died in the War of Independence and onward. Some of the municipal committee involved found such reservations politically motivated, Rav Rabinowitz insisting that this was “a national issue common to all.” In the end, “Olei HaGardom” and the first ten martyrs (but not Belkind and Lashinsky) received the city council’s approval, the names assigned to streets in East Talpiot’s Armon HaNetsiv area that had been captured in the Six-Day War.⁸²

Begin’s ascension as Likud party leader to the prime ministership in May 1977, a sea change in Israeli politics after three decades, bestowed the imprimatur of the State of Israel upon Ben-Yosef. That October, he helped bury Schein, who served in the Irgun after his release from prison in 1946, near Ben-Yosef’s gravesite. (In 1961, Yunitchman had been laid to rest there, as requested in his will.) In 1978, President Efraim Katzir conferred a parchment on those whose sons had died at the gallows, and the country’s

Independence Day parade saw former members of the Hagana, Irgun, and LEHI march together for the first time. To mark the fortieth anniversary of Ben-Yosef's death, Rosenfeld republished *Sefer Ben-Yosef* and lauded him during a one-hour "Galei Tsahal" army radio program devoted to those who died at the gallows; thousands arrived at the Rosh Pina cemetery in tribute. With full state panoply, Prime Ministry Begin commenced making official pilgrimages to the Akko prison, to the Tsfat cemetery where some of the gallows' victims were buried, and to Ben-Yosef's grave, asserting in 1979 that "if not for those who ascended the gallows the state would not have arisen." That same year saw the dedication of the "Shlomo Ben-Yosef cave," where the trio had hidden on that fateful day in April 1938; financing from Begin's office turned the site into a visitors' center intended to draw students and youth movements.⁸³

The last step towards national legitimization of the Betari took place in early 1982, when Begin's government announced that Ben-Yosef and each of the individuals who had died at the gallows would be honored by state stamps. The series, to be issued under the title "martyrs – souvenir sheet," bore the caption "martyrs of the struggle for Israel's independence." *Davar's* reviewer blasted the decision as the effort of the current political establishment "to immortalize by every possible form the history of the Betar-Herut movement, and this in the most obstinate way that borders on blind fanaticism." Writing in *HaAretz*, Amos Elon particularly decried the apotheosis thereby of Hakim, Bet Tsur, and Ben-Yosef, the first two "political murderers" and the third "a youngster who threw a bomb on a civilian bus filled with women and children," both actions that endangered the yishuv. This "continued manipulation" to "fabricate a legend" of "tortured martyrs who contributed much to Israel's independence in the modern age" had to be resisted. Replying in turn, Herut's Aryeh Eshel acknowledged that the stamps reflected an effort to "eliminate the hierarchy of bereavement" exercised by Labor governments since 1948, the present coalition intending to "correct the historic injustice" consistently perpetrated heretofore by its traditional rivals. The stamp series saw light on December 23, 1982.⁸⁴

The official transformation became evident with Likud in power. Government funds renovated the Rosh Pina cemetery, where a monument next to Ben-Yosef's grave was inscribed with the words "to die or to conquer the mountain," and state commemorations for Ben-Yosef took place every time the Hebrew calendar read 30 Sivan. In 1983, the mental hospital in Akko gave way to a national museum under the auspices of the Ministry of Defense,

with exhibits in the British gallows chamber depicting the lives of its victims. In his introduction to the autobiography of an Irgun officer who had received clemency from the hangman's noose, Begin emphasized the obligation to tell the nation of "the greatness of these liberators' sacrifice, dedication, and wisdom." His last statement on the subject, sent in 1987 to a memorial service in Ramat Gan for the Irgun and LEHI members who alone had gone to the British gallows, singled out the "mighty faith" of Jabotinsky disciple Ben-Yosef, one of a group which "illuminated the paths of all the fighters who came in their footsteps." At a similar government ceremony three years later, Yitshak Shamir, LEHI's military commander after British police had killed Stern in February 1942 and now the current Israeli Prime Minister, wondered aloud: did Ben-Yosef imagine at the gallows that a day would arrive when his comrades would come "with heads held high at this and related monuments to raise his memory in a free and independent State of Israel?"⁸⁵

A documentary by the Israeli film-maker Asher Tlalim entitled *Galoot* (2003), made during the Palestinian-Arab Second Intifada ("shaking off"), questioned the state's new Ben-Yosef narrative. In line with supporters of the Second Intifada, who characterized these attacks and suicide bombings as "a war of national liberation" against Israel's "occupation" of territory since the Six-Day War, the film ended with reflections by Ariella Atzmon. As the child of militant Jewish nationalists, the former lecturer in philosophy and education recalled singing Skolsky's "Shir HaMered" in homage to Shlomo Ben-Yosef, and particularly its evocation of Rahel Tabacznik's mourning cries for her martyred, dear son. Atzmon went on to declare that Israel did not want peace, which the Palestinians would desire when they had a country. Her mention of Ben-Yosef and asserting that "Arab people do not have a monopoly on violence" were cited in a lengthy review by Jacqueline Rose in the *London Review of Books* about two volumes on contemporary Islamic suicide bombers, sparking in turn a letter to the editor that Ben-Yosef and his comrades had only fired in the air. "Bombers Not Martyrs" countered the "new post-Zionist" historian Avi Shlaim in January 2005, who observed that the three conspirators intended to kill all the Arab passengers and had fired directly on the bus.⁸⁶

Coming at a time when most Jews viewed the Palestinian-Arab uprising as an unrelieved and unrelenting terrorist campaign against Jewish civilians, and when the State of Israel continued to be subject to regular vituperation in the United Nations and its very existence threatened in genocidal language by a potentially nuclear Islamist Iran, this challenge did not impinge upon

the Israeli public consciousness. In May 2006, a monument to the “sacrifice, firmness, and devotion” of the fighters of the Hagana, Etsel, and LEHI was dedicated in Ramat Gan, presided over by President Moshe Katsav. A well-received popular history of the Mandate period, released in 2007 by the original Labor publishing house Am Oved, mentioned Ben-Yosef’s role without reference to the contentious Left vs. Right debates over *havlaga*. On Israel’s sixtieth anniversary, Galila Ron-Feder-Amit, the country’s most prolific author of children’s books, including laudatory biographies of Stern, Jabotinsky, and Ben-Yosef, lit one of the twelve torches at the state’s formal celebration. And, for the first time, representatives of all the yishuv’s underground military movements took part in a ceremony on the lawn of the Defense Ministry’s headquarters in Tel Aviv. “To our sorrow,” declared Minister Ehud Barak on that afternoon of June 1, 2008, “in the 60-year-old State of Israel, whose revival and existence you defended with your self-sacrifice, the values you have instilled can no longer be taken for granted.”⁸⁷

Ben-Yosef, the quiet Betari claiming membership number 2,743 who remained anonymous until the final weeks of his life, proudly dedicated his entire existence to those values of sacrifice for the collective. By contrast, much of the present generation of Israeli-Jewish youth, having undergone an individualization process under the influence of Western culture and globalization which have been embraced by the country’s educational system, is far removed from the selfless orientation which inspired the first Jew to be hanged by the British in Palestine. Coinciding with the adult population’s increased mistrust of government leaders and institutions, these youngsters’ uncertain search for personal identity and purpose would have been foreign to Ben-Yosef and to his contemporaries.⁸⁸ At the same time, Ben-Yosef’s last recorded thoughts testify that he would have found comfort knowing that his actualization of the Betar credo “to die or to conquer the mountain” directly influenced numerous others of his generation, whose passionate Zionist commitment fueled their own realization of this ideal. He also would have been thrilled that “Jabotinsky” is the most named street in the State of Israel today.

One street in the East Talpiyot section of Israel’s capital now carries Ben-Yosef’s full name in Hebrew (including years of birth and death), in Arabic, and in English. The small, blue sign with white lettering offers no additional explanation to the generally uninformed passersby. Further, the seventieth year of his death in the Akko fortress was marked by a single ceremony, with scores of Etsel veterans and Betar members attending a

memorial service at the Rosh Pina cemetery. Yosi Ahimeir, director of the Jabotinsky Institute, emphasized then that Israelis could still learn from his example of “no” to restraint against Arab terror. Ahimeir concluded by reading the recently discovered words in Ben-Yosef’s hand, written in a volume of Shalom Aleichem’s autobiography, shortly before he was hanged: “I have nothing. I want nothing for myself. Everything is for the nation, the nation of Israel. Shlomo Ben-Yosef, Rosh Pina.”⁸⁹ Otherwise, the anniversary went unnoticed. Perhaps Shlomo Ben-Yosef, his name now faded into obscurity, would have preferred it so.

Notes

- 1 *Sefer Betar, Korot U'Mekorot*, 2:2, H. Ben-Yeruham, ed. (Jerusalem, 1976), pp. 724–725. At the close of the Arab Revolt, one year later, the number of Jewish victims would almost reach 500. Yehuda Slutzki, *Sefer Toldot HaHagana*, 2:2 (Tel Aviv, 1964), pp. 650, 801. Betar is an abbreviation of the Brit Trumpeldor world youth organization, as well as the name of the last Jewish stronghold against the Romans during the Bar Kokhba revolt.
- 2 *Havlagat O Teguva*, Yaacov Shavit, ed. (Jerusalem, 1983), pp. 39–71, 95–96; *Hanita: HaAliya, HaHitgonenut, HaHitabzrut* (Tel Aviv, 1939). “Eye for an eye” appears in *Exodus*, 21:24.
- 3 *Havlagat O Teguva*, pp. 82–85; Slutzki, *Sefer Toldot HaHagana*, pp. 671–673. For the talmudic teaching, cited by the Medieval commentator Rashi on *Exodus* 22:1, see *Yoma*, Babylonian Talmud, 85b.
- 4 Aryeh Naor, *David Razi'el* (Tel Aviv, 1990), chaps. 5–8; Yehoshua Ofir, *Rishonei Etsel, 1931–1940* (Israel, 2002), pp. 127–131; Ya'akov Eliav, *Mevukash* (Jerusalem, 1983), pp. 39–45; *Havlagat O Teguva*, pp. 97–99. For a thorough study of Jabotinsky's shifting position regarding resistance, see Yosef Heller, “Ze'ev Jabotinsky U'Sheilat 'HaHavlagat', 1926–1939: Hashkafat Olam B'Mivhan HaMetsiut,” in *Temurot BaHistoria HaYehudit HaHadasha*, S. Almog et al., eds. (Jerusalem, 1988), pp. 283–320.
- 5 Ofir, *Rishonei Etsel*, pp. 100, 147–148; Yunitichman to E. Jabotinsky, Mar. 14, 1937, file 5/4–106P, Jabotinsky Archives (hereafter JA), Tel Aviv; Haim Shabbtai interview, Jan. 12, 1998, JA; *Shimshon Yunitichman*, A. Remba, ed. (Tel Aviv, 1962), pp. 58–59; Yunitichman testimony, n.d., file 24/13, Hagana Archives (hereafter HA), Tel Aviv;

- Zuravin testimony, Aug. 25, 1959, file 16/1/16K, JA. For the "*plugat giyus*" in Rosh Pina, see Moshe Stein, *B'Yom Sheirut*, Y. Crust, ed. (Tel Aviv, 1986), which includes photographs of Ben-Yosef at work; *Sefer Shlomo Ben-Yosef*, Shalom Rosenfeld, ed. (Tel Aviv, 1979 ed.), pp. 80-84.
- 6 Shalom Rosenberg, "Holem v'Lohem," *B'Eretz Yisrael* 68 (Oct. 1977), 13; David Niv, ed., *Rosh Pina, Bat Me'ab* (Jerusalem, 1983), pp. 314-315; Yosef Klausner, *K'ShehUma Nilhemet Al Heruta, Mas'ot Historiot* (Tel Aviv, 1936); Greenberg's 1936 poem was first published in *Sefer HaKitrug V'HaEmuna* (1937) and reprinted in the definitive Uri Zvi Greenberg, *Kol Ketavav – Shirim*, 3 (Jerusalem, 1991), pp. 187-189; Ya'akov Vinshal, *HaRishon B'Khovshei HaHar* (Tel Aviv, 1968), p. 72; Slutski, *Sefer Toldot HaHagana*, p. 809.
 - 7 *Sefer Ben-Yosef*, pp. 78-79; Haim Lazar-Litai, *Af-Al-Pi, Sefer Aliya Bet* (Tel Aviv, 1957), pp. 87-92; Hitin testimony, Sept. 8, 1959; Zuravin testimony, Aug. 25, 1959, both in file 16/1/16K, JA; Heller, "Zeev Jabotinsky," p. 293n31.
 - 8 *Sefer Ben-Yosef*, pp. 18-19, 63-64, 66-67; Vinshal, *HaRishon B'Khovshei HaHar*, pp. 19-41. Betar's "illegal" immigration movement was dubbed "Af Al Pi" (despite everything). Stern's poem first appeared in the second issue of *HaMetsuda*, during the summer of 1932.
 - 9 Ze'ev Jabotinsky, *Samson*, C. Brooks, trans. (New York, 1986); Ze'ev Jabotinsky, *Ketavim, Shirim* (Tel Aviv, 1947), p. 205; *Sefer Ben-Yosef*; Vinshal, *HaRishon B'Khovshei HaHar*, pp. 20, 35, 48; Yehoshua Yeivin, *Yerushalayim Mehaka* (Tel Aviv, 1932); Yosef Ahimeir and Shmuel Shatski, eds., *Hinenu Sikrikim* (Tel Aviv, 1978), p. 22 and *passim*; Abba Ahimeir, *HaTsiyonut HaMahapkhani* (Tel Aviv, 1966).
 - 10 Yehuda Lapidot, *Leidata Shel Mahteret HaEtsel B'Shnot HaShloshim* (Tel Aviv, 2001), p. 85; Yitzhak Gurion, "Lohem Etsel Rishon B'Tsel HaGardom," *HaUma* 91 (Jan. 1972), 335-340; Schein testimony, n.d., file 16/1/16K, JA. Ben-Hur would be released on Feb. 4, 1944. One scholar states that the British hanged more than 100 Arabs during the course of the Arab Revolt, between April 1936 and June 1939. Ann Mosely Lesch, *Arab Politics in Palestine, 1917-1939: The Frustration of a Nationalist Movement* (Ithaca, 1979), p. 225.
 - 11 Ben-Yeruham, *Sefer Betar*, p. 727.
 - 12 Schein and Zuravin testimonies, JA. The official history of the Irgun later quoted Schein's account at length. David Niv, *Ma'arkhot HaIrgun HaTsva'i HaLeumi*, 2:2 (Tel Aviv, 1965), p. 62. Ya'akov Vinshal, a Revisionist-Zionist who interviewed many involved in the action, offers an extended study along these lines. Vinshal, *HaRishon B'Khovshei HaHar*, pp. 81-86.
 - 13 Intelligence report, Apr. 26, 1938, file 8 Klali/21, HA.
 - 14 Auster testimony, n.d., P28/14, Ben-Zion Dinur MSS., Central Archives of the History of the Jewish People, Jerusalem. This and the contemporary report were relied upon by Slutski, *Sefer Toldot HaHagana*, p. 810. An account edited in 1939 by Shalom Rosenfeld, who headed the Rosh Pina Betar company, cited the confession of the three Betarim immediately upon being arrested: "We did what we did because we wished to be hanged in order to shaken Palestinian Jewish youth and to arouse it to go to the hills" in revolt. *Sefer Ben-Yosef*, p. 20. Years later, a study sponsored by the

- Jabotinsky Institute reflected the same position, declaring that, when questioned, Schein, Zuravin, and Ben-Yosef expressed no remorse, “saw themselves as ‘national heroes’ who went out to revenge the murder of Jews, and happily announced that they would go to the gallows.” Yitzhak Steigman, *Shelah David* (Tel Aviv, 1997), p. 201.
- 15 Auster testimony; Irgun announcement, Apr. 28, 1938, file 46/1130/2003, Arkhion Tsahal U'Ma'arkhot HaBitahon (hereafter ATMB), Tel-HaShomer, Israel. According to a Betari who had been in Rosh Pina at that time, the regional Hagana commander proceeded to take away all the legitimate weapons and did not permit any to be given to the Betarim there. Niv, *Rosh Pina*, p. 304.
 - 16 *Davar*, Apr. 24, 1938; Jewish Agency statement, Aug. 8, 1938, S5/967, Central Zionist Archives (hereafter CZA), Jerusalem; Hagana intelligence report, file 8 P'nim/32, HA.
 - 17 Vinshal, *HaRishon B'Khovshei HaHar*, pp. 92-93; Avraham Schein, “Zot Teliya!” *HaOlam HaZeh*, n.d., attached to *Herut* clippings about a Ben-Yosef memorial service, June 20, 1958, JA.
 - 18 Aryeh Kotzer, *Marvad Adom (Darki Im Yair)* (Tel Aviv, n.d.), pp. 62-67. For Stern's views at this point, see Yosef Crust and Anshel Spielman, eds., *Mardut U'Ma'as* (Tel Aviv, 1988), pp. 46-47; Natan Yellin-Mor, *Lobamei Herut Yisrael* (Jerusalem, 1975), pp. 46-49. In September 1938, Stern repeated to a friend his view that the trio's action resulted from the “vacuum” created by the Irgun's unclear, apparent “half-*havlaga*” line. Ila (Stressman) Lubinski interview, n.d., JA.
 - 19 Kotzer, *Marvad Adom*, pp. 68-69; Jabotinsky to Ben-Yosef, 1938, file 41/4-1A, JA.
 - 20 File 7-8/G, 8B, JA; Aug. 8, 1938 statement, S5/957, CZA; May 29, 1938, Jewish Agency Executive (hereafter JAE), CZA.
 - 21 Vinshal, *HaRishon B'Khovshei HaHar*, p. 94;
 - 22 K. and M. Kaplan reports, May-June 1938, file 20/1/16K, JA.
 - 23 Kaplan reports, file 20/1/16K, JA.
 - 24 Kaplan reports, file 20/1/16K, JA.
 - 25 Joseph address, June 3, 1938, file 69.3, 759/4, Israel State Archives (hereafter ISA), Jerusalem.
 - 26 Kaplan reports, file 20/1/16K, JA.
 - 27 Kaplan reports, file 20/1/16K, JA.
 - 28 Kaplan reports, file 20/1/16K, JA.
 - 29 Kaplan reports, file 20/1/16K, JA; Vinshal, *HaRishon B'Khovshei HaHar*, pp. 104-106.
 - 30 Jabotinsky to MacDonald, June 3, 1938, Colonial Office papers (hereafter CO) 733/379/75561/3, Public Record Office (hereafter PRO), Kew, England; Jabotinsky to MacDonald and to Belisha, June 3, 1938, file 759/4 P, ISA; A. Remba, *Jabotinsky LaOlam U'LeAmo* (Jerusalem, 1944), p. 141.
 - 31 *Manchester Guardian*, June 6, 1938; Jabotinsky to Crozier, June 5, 1938, JA; London *Jewish Chronicle* and *Palestine Post*, June 6, 1938.
 - 32 *Sefer Shlomo Ben-Yosef*, pp. 91, 65.
 - 33 Jewish Agency Executive Jerusalem (hereafter JAE), June 1, 1933, CZA.

- 34 Moshe Sharett, *Yoman Medini*, 3 (Tel Aviv, 1972), pp. 30-31, 118, 133 ; Shertok to Haining, June 8, 1938, A245/211, CZA.
- 35 Shertok report at Va'ad HaLeumi, June 28, 1938, J1/2388, CZA.
- 36 Minute, n.d.; MacDonald to Jabotinsky, June 7, 1938; MacDonald to Goldbloom, June 10, 1938; Schein parents to Queen and King, June 6, 1938; Chief Rabbis to King, June 9, 1938; all in CO 733/379/75561/3, PRO.
- 37 Haining to Roger, June 7, 1938; Haining to Henry, June 7, 1938; both in CO 733/379/75561/3, PRO.
- 38 Pownell to Shuckburgh, June 13, 1938; Shuckburgh to Parkinson, June 13, 1938; Shuckburgh minute, June 14, 1938; all in CO 733/379/75561/3, PRO.
- 39 Ben-Zvi memorandum, June 23, 1938, J1/7666, CZA.
- 40 Buchspan to Jabotinsky, July 12, 1938, 1/26/3/1A, JA.
- 41 CO 733/379/75561/3; Foreign Office (hereafter FO) 371/21888, PRO; Shmuel Katz, *Lone Wolf: A Biography of Vladimir (Ze'ev) Jabotinsky*, 2 (New York, 1966), pp. 1609-1610.
- 42 Meir (Mark) Kahan, "Sab Esh LaHazit" (Tel Aviv, 1988), pp. 38-40.
- 43 Vinshal, *HaRishon B'Khovshei HaHar*, pp. 118-119; MacMichael to MacDonald, June 24, 1938, CO 733/379/75561/3, PRO.
- 44 Jabotinsky to MacDonald, June 24, 1938, CO 733/379/75561/3, PRO; Jabotinsky to NZO Tel Aviv, June 22, 1938; Jacobi to NZO Palestine, June 25, 1938; both in file 2/4-4G, JA; Joseph to MacMichael, June 25, 1938, file 759/4-P, ISA. The chief rabbis of Palestine cabled to the Colonial Secretary on their own, appealing for clemency. Herzog and Meir to MacDonald, June 24, 1938, CO 733/379/75561/3, PRO. For Jabotinsky's later reaction to Herzog's appeal, see Yitshak Alfasi, ed. *HaIrgun HaTsva'i HaLeumi B'Eretz Yisrael*, 1 (Tel Aviv, 1990), p. 32.
- 45 MacDonald notation on MacMichael telegram to MacDonald, June 24, 1938, CO 733/379/75561/3, PRO; Weizmann-MacDonald interview, June 22, 1938, Louis D. Brandeis microfilm no. 27, ZA; MacDonald memorandum, June 23, 1938, FO 371/21878, PRO; Weizmann to MacDonald, June 24, 1938; Shuckburgh minute, June 24, 1938; both in CO 733/379/75561/3, PRO.
- 46 *Palestine Post*, *HaAretz*, *HaBoker*, *Davar*: June 26-28, 1938; JAE, June 26, 1938, CZA.
- 47 *Sefer Shlomo Ben-Yosef*, pp. 24-25. For the most recent study of NILI, see Shmuel Katz, *The Aaronsohn Saga* (Jerusalem, 2007).
- 48 *Sefer Shlomo Ben-Yosef*, pp. 37-38, 60-61; *Herut*, June 18, 1958; Vinshal, *HaRishon B'Khovshei HaHar*, pp. 128-139, 159-161; Goldman to Benari, Feb. 19, 1975, file 2080/12-P, ISA.
- 49 Meeting of June 28, 1938, J1/2388, CZA; Ben-Gurion at JAE, June 26, 1938, CZA.
- 50 *Sefer Shlomo Ben-Yosef*, pp. 32-33.
- 51 Ben-Yosef to Jabotinsky, June 28, 1938, file 1/26/3-1A, JA.
- 52 Remba, *Jabotinsky LaOlam U'LeAmo*, pp. 142-143; Jabotinsky to MacDonald, June 28, 1938, CO 733/379/75561, 3, PRO; MacDonald-Jabotinsky interview, June 28, 1938, S25/22711, CZA; Alfasi, *HaIrgun HaTsva'i HaLeumi*, p. 31.
- 53 Katz, *Lone Wolf*, p. 1611; memorandum, July 6, 1938; MacDonald to MacMichael,

- June 28, 1938, cables #248 and # 249; all in CO 733/379/75561/3, PRO.
- 54 Katz, *Lone Wolf*, pp. 1611-1612.
 - 55 Y. Katznelson to Jabotinsky, July 1, 1938, file 1/26/3/A, JA; *Sefer Shlomo Ben-Yosef*, pp. 41-42; Vinshal, *HaRishon B'Khovshei HaHar*, pp. 139-143.
 - 56 *Sefer Shlomo Ben-Yosef*, pp. 43-46; Vinshal, *HaRishon B'Khovshei HaHar*, pp. 143-148; Niv, *Rosh Pina*, p. 321. MacMichael later informed MacDonald that the cabled request from Ben-Yosef's mother had reached him after the execution. Had he received the telegram in time, however, "he would not in all the circumstances have felt justified in interfering with the due course of the law." The Colonial Secretary seconded this view in responding to a member of parliament: "I cannot help feeling that to postpone the execution for any purpose in the circumstances would have been to prolong unnecessarily the agony of Ben Josef." MacDonald to McGovern, Aug. 15, 1938 (and enclosing Rahel Tabacznik's cable to MacMichael, June 28, 1938), CO 733/379/75561/3, PRO.
 - 57 *Sefer Shlomo Ben-Yosef*, pp. 50, 53, 58.
 - 58 Alfasi, *HaIrgun HaTsva'i HaLeumi*, p. 265; Eliav testimony, n.d., file 16-71, JA; *Sefer Toldot HaHagana*, pp. 811-813; Aug. 9, 1938 statement, file 46/1130/2003, ATMB.
 - 59 *Sefer Shlomo Ben-Yosef*, pp. 46-48, 51-52; Katznelson to Rav Binyamin (Radler-Feldman), July 27, 1938, A357/60, CZA.
 - 60 *Sefer Shlomo Ben-Yosef*, pp. 98-102; *Palestine Post*, June 30, 1938; *London Jewish Chronicle*, clipping in CO 733/379/75561/3, PRO; Ben-Zion Katz, "Hoi, Angliya, Angliya!" *Hadashot*, July 1, 1938. *HaYarden* devoted its entire issue of June 30, 1938, to Ben-Yosef's life and death.
 - 61 Histadrut circular, n.d., S5/566, CZA; Histadrut circular, n.d., file 3/17/1/16 K, JA; Sirkis to Va'ad HaLeumi, n.d., A340/15, CZA; *HaAretz*, June 30, 1938.
 - 62 Mapai Central Committee, June 29, 1938, Bet Berl Archives, Kfar Saba, Israel; JAE, July 7, 1938, CZA; Mapai Central Committee to branches, July 11, 1938, file 12/1/16k, JA. For Katznelson's contemporary embrace of Trumpeldor but not of Ben-Yosef as Labor's hero, see Berl Katznelson, *Im Hazon HaHagana* (Tel Aviv, 1948), p. 106. For the Arlosoroff murder and its political ramifications on the yishuv, see chap. 8.
 - 63 MacDonald memorandum, July 5, 1938, FO 371/21878; Cabinet conclusions, July 6, 1938, CO 733/367/75156/1; both PRO.
 - 64 Weizmann to Shertok, July 2, 1938, S25/1716, CZA; Weizmann to Haining, July 3, 1938, Weizmann Archives, Rehovot, Israel; JAE, July 7, 1938, CZA; Sharett, *Yoman Medini*, p. 220; Shertok-Battershill talk, July 7, 1938, S25/22743, CZA. In Weizmann's view, the Revisionists were "morally responsible" for the death of Ben-Yosef, "this poor misguided youth." Weizmann to Shertok, July 2, 1938, S25/1716, CZA.
 - 65 *Zionews*, 1:21, in file 1/21-4G, JA; Wedgwood letter, May 30, 1938, A209/158/2, CZA; Irgun translation, file 125/130/2003, ATMB.
 - 66 July 10, 1938 meeting, J1/2388, CZA; *Davar*, July 8, 1938; *HaYesod*, July 14, 1938.
 - 67 Golomb-Jabotinsky talk, July 10, 1938; copies in file 80/47/11, HA, and file 35/4/1A, JA; Ze'ev Jabotinsky, *Neumim, 1927-1940* (Tel Aviv, 1948), pp. 303-326.

- 68 Naor, *David Raziel*, pp. 132-133; Jabotinsky to Klausner, Aug. 5, 1938, file 4-1086/327, Joseph Klausner MSS., Jewish National Library, Jerusalem; Stern to Raziel, Aug. 19, 1938; Jabotinsky to NZO Palestine, Aug. 23, 1938, file 6/1130/2003; both in ATMB; Joseph B. Schechtman, *Fighter and Prophet: The Vladimir Jabotinsky Story, The Last Years* (New York, 1961), pp. 463, 381. For Stern's growing disillusionment with Jabotinsky, see Yosef Heller, *Lehi: Ideologia U'Politika, 1940-1949*, 1 (Jerusalem, 1989), chap. 2.
- 69 Yunitichman-Dobkin talk, Aug. 12, 1938, file 29/394P, JA; Yunitichman-Lubinski-Golomb meeting, Aug. 30, 1938, Shai files 8 internal/9, HA; file 2/19/4K, JA; Raziel to Stern, (Sept.) 1938, file 7/1130/2003; Jabotinsky to Raziel, Sept. 25, 1938, file 95/1130/2003; both in ATMB; Jacobi to Ben-Gurion, Oct. 7 and 16, 1938, file 1/3-4G, JA; Naor, *David Raziel*, pp. 134-142; David Ben-Gurion, *Zikhronot* 5 (Tel Aviv, 1982), pp. 274, 275, 277-278, 280, 315-316, 332-335, 355-360, 369.
- 70 *A Report: Betar's Third World Conference Warsaw Sept. 11-16, 1938* (Bucharest, 1940); transcript of conference; both in Menahem Begin Heritage Center archives (hereafter MBA), Jerusalem; Heller, "Ze'ev Jabotinsky," pp. 300-305; Yisrael Eldad, *Ma'aser Rishon* (Tel Aviv, 1975 ed.), pp. 19-25; Jabotinsky, *Ketavim, Shirim*, pp. 217-218. For Begin's earlier tribute to the trio, written one month after Ben-Yosef's death, see Menahem Begin, "Di Tat," *HaMedina*, July 29, 1938. For the Evian Conference, see A.J. Sherman, *Island Refuge* (Berkeley, 1973), chap. 5. Halpern had called for this platform between July and December 1937 in a three-part series published by *HaYarden*. He later broke with Stern and began the "Canaanite" movement. See Yonatan Ratosh, *Rashit HaYamim, Petihuyot Ivriyot* (Tel Aviv, 1962). His platform for the Betar conference is in file 2/32 -2B, JA.
- 71 *Sefer Toldot HaHagana*, pp. 920-934; FO 371/21888, PRO; David Ben-Gurion, *Zikhronot*, pp. 282, 325. For *Kristallnacht*, see Rita Thalmann and Emmanuel Feinerman, *Crystal Night: 9-10 Nov. 1938*, G. Cremonesi trans. (London, 1974).
- 72 Norman H. Rose, *The Gentile Zionists: A Study in Anglo-Zionist Diplomacy, 1929-1939* (London, 1973), pp. 179-220; Ada Amikhal Yeivin, *Sambatyon* (Bet-El, 1995), pp. 57-58; Moshe Bela, *Olam Shel Jabotinsky* (Tel Aviv, 1980), pp. 96-97; Jabotinsky to Raziel, June 24, 1939, file 15/1130/ 2003, ATMB; file 1/7-19-4K, JA; Schechtman, *Fighter and Prophet* (New York, 1961), p. 474. For Stern's private reaction to the White Paper, see Natan Yelin-Mor, *Shnot B'Terem* (Israel, 1990), pp. 67-68.
- 73 Esther Stein-Ashkenazi, *Betar B'Eretz Yisrael, 1925-1947* (Jerusalem, 1998), p. 163; Yehoshua Yeivin, *Nitshono Shel Shlomo Ben-Yosef* (Tel Aviv, 1940); Stein, *B'Yom Sheirut*, p. 33; Shlomo Skolsky, "Shir Ben-Yosef," *B'Sod Brit HaDamim, Shirim* (Tel Aviv, 1987), p. 87; Hanokh Kalei, "Shlomo Ben Yosef"; Uri Zvi Greenberg, "Shlomo Ben-Yosef"; both in file 4/5-16L, JA; *HaYarden*, June 18, 1939; Naor, *David Raziel*, p. 214. For Trumpeldor's example being interpreted differently by the opposing political camps between 1920-1948, see Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition* (Chicago, 1995), pp. 148-157.
- 74 Rosenfeld and Raziel essays, *Sefer Shlomo Ben-Yosef*, Introduction, and pp. 103-106. For Jabotinsky's misreading of imminent war by Germany, see Yaacov Shavit and

- Liat Shtayer-Livni, "Mi Kara Ze'ev? Ekh Hevin Ze'ev Jabotinsky Et Tiva Shel Germania HaNazit V'Et Kavanoteha?," in A. Barlei and P. Ginossar, eds. *Isb B'Sa'ar* (Israel, 2004), pp. 345-369.
- 75 Stein-Ashkenazi, *Betar B'Eretz Yisrael*, pp. 185, 199-200, 219-220, 270; Amir Goldstein, "Gevura Betarit: Shlomo Ben-Yosef – HaParasha, HaMitots, U'Mekomo BaToda'a HaRevisionistit," senior paper, University of Haifa (Aug. 2001), pp. 37-42; Gerold Frank, *The Deed* (New York, 1963), p. 69. Two of the condemned men, Moshe Barazani (LEHI) and Meir Feinstein (Irgun), blew themselves up in a Jerusalem prison on April 21, 1947, before the sentence could be carried out.
- 76 Menachem Begin, *White Nights: The Story of a Prisoner in Russia*, K. Kaplan, trans. (New York, 1977 ed.), pp. 56-57; *Herut*, July 6, 1951; Yosef Nedava, *Sefer Olei HaGardom* (Tel Aviv, 1952); Jan. 3, 1955, *Divrei HaKnesset*, 17 (Jerusalem, 1955), p. 479; files 6344/13-GL and 1134/4-GL; both in JA; *Herut*, May 13, 24, 1957. A pioneering study of the Ben-Gurion – Begin clash is Udi Lebel, *HaDerekh El HaPantheon: Etsel, LEHI, U'Gvulot HaZikaron HaYisraeli* (Jerusalem, 2007).
- 77 *Herut*, *Ma'ariv*, and *Yediot Aharonot*, July 7, 1959; *Herut*, July 10, 1959. For the two-year preparations, see file 4/5-16L, JA. The full draft of Yunitchman's speech is in file 5/6-106P, JA.
- 78 Lebel, *HaDerekh El HaPantheon*, pp. 278-279; *Herut*, June 9, 1963. In 1950, Gurion had written a tribute in English about his comrade, *Triumph on the Gallows*, that was published by Betar.
- 79 Ben-Gurion to Klarsfeld, Feb. 23, 1967, David Ben-Gurion Archives (hereafter BGA), Sdeh Boker, Israel. Two months after leaving the prime ministership, Ben-Gurion asserted privately that Herut and Revisionist publicists, in "falsifying" the image of the past, "were inflating the image of Ben-Yosef who actually did nothing except for the fact that his comrades did everything so that he would be hanged." Aug. 19, 1963 diary entry, BGA. These words are absent within the quotation given in Lebel, *HaDerekh El HaPantheon*, p. 328. Ben-Gurion and others who accused the Irgun and LEHI of murdering innocent civilians did not acknowledge that, at the orders of the Hagana high command, 19 members of Gedud Moriya set out from Atarot for "Operation Shmuel" early on March 4, 1948, "to finish" (*l'hasel*) a busload of Arab workers on the road from Ramallah to Latrun in retaliation for fatal Arab attacks on Jews traveling on the Jerusalem-Ramallah road. Shots were fired from ambush, but the bus driver continued on. Twenty-one-year-old commander Noam Grosman and fifteen others of the retreating men were killed by Arabs from the surrounding villages, their mutilated bodies buried in Jerusalem's Sanhedria cemetery three days later. Noam's parents prepared a memorial booklet to their son, and sent Ben-Gurion a copy with the inscription "On your command he fought, on your command he fell. May your name be blessed." The Prime Minister replied: "I was deeply moved and shaken to the depth of my soul. Blessed be the nation that has sons like Noam. Doubly blessed is the nation that has parents like you. In esteemed respect, David Ben-Gurion." The remains of the sixteen were ultimately brought to Jerusalem's Mt. Herzl military cemetery in 1951. On March 17, 1985, a sign reading "The Street of

- the Sixteen" was dedicated in the Jerusalem northern suburb of Pisgat Ze'ev. Their names, inscribed as "having fallen for the defense of Jerusalem in a battle near Atarot," were placed on a tablet outside the local scientific-technological school. Meir Avizohar, *Moriya B'Yerushalayim B'Tashah* (Lod, 2002), pp. 49-54; Yitzhak Navon, "Zikhron Teuda: B'Yagon U'V'Hokara – Ben-Gurion V'HaMishpahot HaShakulot," in *Hayil B'Ruah*, Y. Rosenson and O. Yisraeli, eds. (Tel-Aviv, 2009), p. 195. My thanks to Dr. Yossi Spanier for this source.
- 80 Begin speech, file 4/12/29P, MBA; Dec. 25 and 31, 1963, *Divei HaKnesset*, 38 (Jerusalem, 1963), pp. 596-600, 626-629; Lebel, *HaDerekh El HaPantheon*, pp. 304-322, 286.
 - 81 Haim Lazar, *Mivtsar Akko* (Tel Aviv, 1962); Yitzhak Gurion, *HaNitsabon Alei Gardom* (Tel Aviv, 1963), with Begin preface; Niv, *Ma'arkhot HaIrgun HaTsva'i HaLeumi*; Vinshal, *HaRishon B'Khovshei HaHar*; file 14/9/20-P, MBA. An earlier edition of Lazar's book had appeared in 1953, also sponsored by Herut. In 1939, Ben-Yosef's execution had inspired Vinshal to write the story "Yisurei Avshalom." It was subsequently included in Vinshal's collection *HaKrav Al HaMenora* (Tel Aviv, 1957), pp. 75-132.
 - 82 Meetings of Jan. 1, 1973; Mar. 9, 1973; Apr. 6, 1973; May 1, 1973; June 24, 1973; all in Box 2655, Municipality Archives, Jerusalem.
 - 83 Gershon Hull, "Avraham Schein Shav L'Shlomo Ben-Yosef B'Rosh Pina," *B'Eretz Yisrael* 68 (73), (Oct. 1977), 12-13; Amikam (Schein) testimony, Feb. 6, 1958, file 13/23-4K, JA; file 2/21- Heh 4K, JA; file 3/17/1/16K, JA; radio program, July 1978, file 4/6-Ayin Tav, JA; Lebel, *HaDerekh El HaPantheon*, pp. 378-379. Upon receiving a copy of the revised *Sefer Ben Yosef*, Begin wrote to Rosenfeld on June 29, 1979: "It became realized in the sons of our generation, with tribulations that have no measure or expression, what was written by that young man, whose anonymity vanished forever, thank God also from the point of view of the State: 'To Die or to Conquer the Mountain – I Will Die and You Will Conquer!' Many after Shlomo Ben-Yosef sacrificed their young lives, at the gallows and on the fields of battle, but the mountain was conquered and it belongs to the Jewish Nation." *Institute News*, Jabotinsky Institute in Israel, vol. 43 (Mar. 2009), p. 8.
 - 84 Lebel, *HaDerekh El HaPantheon*, pp. 377-378; Amos Elon, *Hebet Ahora B'Vehala Mesuyemet* (Tel Aviv, 1988), pp. 361-365.
 - 85 Stein, *B'Yom Sheirut*, p. 145; Lebel, *HaDerekh El HaPantheon*, p. 403; Begin introduction in Haim Gilad, *B'Tsel HaGardom: Sipuro Shel Mefaked B'Etsel* (Tel Aviv, 1983); Yaira Stern, *Lo Bisbvilenu Shar HaSaxsafon: Al Shirei Yair, Avraham Stern* (Jerusalem, 1998), p. 170; Goldstein, "Gevura Betarit", p. 55.
 - 86 *London Review of Books*, Nov. 4, 2004; Dec. 16, 2004; Jan. 6, 2005. Also see Gershom Gorenberg, "To the Victor Go the Street Names," January 14, 2010, www.prospect.org. Skolsky's "Shir Ben-Yosef" (see 73n), published in Poland in 1938, was popularly known in Irgun circles as "Shir HaMered." His poem "Rosh Pina," written in 1941 while he served as the last Betar commander of that *plugat giyus*, received wider acclaim when put to music by the Hagana's Tsvi Ben-Yosef, or "Tsama" (formerly Otto Dressler). Tsvi Ben-Yosef died on May 12, 1948, during

- the successful Arab attack on Gush Etzion. The poem was dedicated to Z(alman) L(evenberg), Rosenfeld's successor to head the Betar group in Rosh Pina. Skolsky, *B'Sod Brit HaDamim*, p. 97; author's telephone interview with Skolsky's daughter, Adia, Oct. 8, 2007. For Shlaim and other "post-Zionist" historians, see Efraim Karsh, *Fabricating Israeli History: "The New Historians"* (London, 1997); Yoav Gelber, *The New Post-Zionist Historians* (New York, 2008).
- 87 Photographs in *HaUma* 164 (July 2006); Haim Shenhav, *HaMandat V'Shivro – Al Ahava U'Vegida* (Tel Aviv, 2007); Galila Ron-Feder-Amit, *HaMored, Avraham (Yair) Stern: Hogeih V'Lohem* (Tel Aviv, 1978); Galila Ron-Feder-Amit, *BaOr U'VaSeter: Sipuro Shel Ze'ev Jabotinsky* (Tel Aviv, 1990), Galila Ron-Feder-Amit, *Likkbosh Et HaHar: Sipuro Shel Shlomo Ben-Yosef* (Tel Aviv, 1993); *HaAretz*, June 8, 2008.
- 88 Efraim Yair, "HaAdafot Erkiyot BaHevra HaYisraelit: Behinat HaTeoria Shel Engelhart Al Modernizatsia V'Shoni Tarbuti," in Uri Cohen *et al.*, eds., *Yisrael VeHaModerniyut, LeMoshe Lisak B'Yovlo* (Tel Aviv, 2006), pp. 85-106; Gershon Shafir and Yoav Peled, *Being Israeli: The Dynamics of Multiple Citizenship* (Cambridge, 2002); Israel Democracy Institute, *The 2008 Democracy Index* (Jerusalem, 2008). A defense of the individualization process, written from a secular perspective, is Yaron Ezrahi, *Rubber Bullets: Power and Consciousness in Modern Israel* (New York, 1997). Begin's eulogy at Schein's funeral paid tribute to how Ben-Yosef's example served others in the pre-state era: "Shlomo Ben-Yosef said before he died that the rocky peak cannot be conquered without a grave on the slopes. Tell him that we conquered the rocky peak – and oh how numerous are the graves on the slopes." Eitan Haber, *Menahem Begin, The Legend and the Man* (New York, 1978), p. 171. In fact, Skolsky's poem "Rosh Pina" took poetic license with Ben-Yosef's emphasis on "to die or to conquer the mountain," citing the words "the rocky peak cannot be conquered without a grave on the slopes!" as the thundering of a quiet voice heard in Rosh Pina's cemetery at midnight.
- 89 *Institute News*, Jabotinsky Institute in Israel, vol. 41 (Sept., 2008), p. 13. Two years later, at a special Knesset session in memory of the twelve Jewish underground members brought to the gallows by the British, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu declared that "from Olei HaGardom to the present day, the message of sacrifice and heroism remains alive." He distinguished between intentional Arab terrorist attacks against Israeli civilians, "while for the Jewish groups such attacks were exceptions," and the Jewish underground attacks against British military targets in "the struggle for freedom." MK Ahmed Tibi called out: "They shot at a bus of civilians" (Ben-Yosef) and "killed a minister" (referring to LEHI members Eliyahu Hakim and Eliyahu Bet-Zouri, who assassinated British Minister Resident Lord Moyne on November 6, 1944). For continued heckling in this vein, Tibi and fellow United Arab List (Ta'al) member Talab El-Sana were ejected from the hall. As he left the plenum, Tibi remarked, "Each nation has its own truth." March 9, 2010, *Ynet news.com*.

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Index

- Aaronsohn, Sarah 272, 300n26, 301n29
 Acheson, Dean 99, 105
 Adler, Julius Ochs 150, 155, 166
 “Af Al Pi” 349n8
Aghia Zoni 340
 Agudas HaRabbonim 50, 53–56, 60, 67–68, 236
 Agudas Israel xii, 56, 58, 60, 73n42, 221, 223–226, 231, 233, 234, 236, 238, 247n32, 248n40, 257, 296, 328, 334
 Ahad Ha’Am (Ginsberg) 8–10, 21–24, 26, 27, 34n24, 39n58, 40n66, 119, 276
 “Aharei Moti” 25, 30
 Aharonovitz, Yosef 202
 Aharonovitz, Zalman (Aranne) 263, 288
 Aharonson, Shlomo 210
 Ahdut HaAvoda 270
Ahiezer 236
 Ahimeir, Abba 190, 202, 205, 206, 208, 210, 212, 263, 267–269, 271–275, 278, 279, 281–285, 289–295, 297, 303n43, 307n71, 314, 338, 348
 Ahimeir, Ya’akov 297, 308n75
 Ahimeir, Yosef 296, 299n17, 301n29, 303n43, 305, 348
 “Ahoti Ruhama” 31
 “Akhen Hatsir HaAm” 10, 199, 200, 216n13
 Akzin, Benjamin 167
 “Al HaShehita” 10, 28
 “Al Levavkhem HaShamem” 10
 “Al Saf Bet Hamedrash” 10
Al-Difa 317
 Aleichem, Shalom (Rabinovitz) 7, 348
 Alexander, David 122
 “Aliya bet” 297, 307n69
 Alliance Israelite Universelle 5
 Al-Qassam, Iz al-Din 264
Altalena 290, 291
 Alter, Abraham Mordecai 48, 49, 55–58, 224, 244n13
 Alter, Isaac Meir 44
 Alter, Judah Aryeh Leib 44
 Alter, Yaakov Aryeh 73n38
 Alter, Simha Bunim 73n38
 Alterman, Natan 217n32
 Altmann, Yehezkel (Ben-Hur) 315, 323, 325, 326
 American Civil Liberties Union 77
 American Council for Judaism xii, 115, 135, 137, 145, 160, 162, 164, 170
 American Emergency Committee for Zionist Affairs 128
American Hebrew 146
 American Jewish Committee 19, 20, 95, 112n48, 117, 133, 142n43, 147, 148, 165, 170, 175
 American Jewish Conference 137, 162
 American Jewish Congress 90, 116, 120, 124, 144, 149, 154, 172
 American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) 20, 57, 116, 117, 122, 176
 American League for a Free Palestine 163
 American Palestine Committee 123, 130, 134
 Amiel, Moshe Avigdor 328, 334
 Amir, Yigal 295
 Anglo-Jewish Association 21, 122
 “Anonymous Soldiers” 314, 332
 “Anti-Semitism is Here” 86
 Arab “peace bands” 339
 Arab Revolt 226, 311, 335, 337, 339, 348n1, 349n10

- Arab riots 28, 79, 153, 180n35, 190, 271, 272, 281, 312
 Arafat, Yasser 295
 Arazi, Tuvya 292
 Arazi, Yehuda 268, 292, 293, 297 (and see Tenenbaum)
 Aristobulus 208, 219n61
 Arlosoroff, Haim xiii, 192, 193, 201, 203–207, 213, 214, 218n51, 261–267, 270, 273–280, 282, 286, 287, 290–296, 298, 301n28, 302n36–37, 302n40, 308n73, 309n79–81, 310n84, 310n86, 335, 352n62
 Arlosoroff, Michal 308n75
 Arlosoroff, Shaul 296
 Arlosoroff, Sima 205, 207, 267, 280, 281, 291, 302n36, 309n78
 “The Arlosoroff Project” 296
 Astor, Nancy 84
 Ataturk, Kemal 272
 Atlantic Charter 124, 128, 130, 140n20, 160, 180n39
 Atzmon, Ariella 346
 Auschwitz–Birkenau 29, 163
 Auster, Nahum 316
 Austin, Warren 167
 Austrian Jews 329
Autoemancipation! 8
 “Avi” 200, 206
 AZAR (Rabinowitz) 189
 Azef, Yavno 17
- Baerwald, Paul 116, 120, 122, 132, 135, 138n3, 139n16, 140n20, 140n22
Baker v. Carr 102
 Balfour Declaration – 38n55, 78–80, 108n9, 113n61, 116, 117, 119, 120, 122, 124, 133, 134, 138n3, 139n11, 139n15, 149, 151, 178n23, 193, 223, 224, 235, 239, 267, 282, 299n14
BaMa’aleh 188, 265, 274, 275, 280
 Bar Giora 21
 Bar Kokhba 341, 348n1
 Barak, Ehud 347
 Barazani, Moshe 354n75
 Baron, Salo 35n29
 “Baruch of Mainz” 42n79
 Baruch, Bernard 90, 91, 93, 94, 98, 111n35
 Basle Program x
 Begin, Menahem xiii, 289–295, 307n71, 308n77, 338, 339, 341–346, 353n70, 355n83, 355n88
 Beilinson, Moshe 202, 211, 218n47, 220n72, 268, 271, 274, 296, 305n58
 Beilis, Menahem Mendel 20, 208, 219n59, 262, 280, 282, 298n4
 “Bein Shinei Arayot” 31
 Bekhor, David 294, 295, 308n76
 Belkin, Samuel 55, 67
 Belkind, Na’aman 328, 344
 Ben-Aharon, Yitshak 286
 Ben-Ami (Rabinovich) 9
 Ben-Elkana, Shlomo 292
 Ben-Gaon, David 311, 314, 317
 Ben-Gurion, David 21, 26, 101, 114n76, 126, 129, 170, 171, 203, 206, 207, 211, 212, 214, 224, 232, 233, 238, 239, 262, 263, 265, 266, 268–270, 274–276, 278, 280, 286–293, 297, 305n58, 311, 318, 323, 324, 329, 335, 337, 338, 341–343, 354n79
 Ben-Horin, Eliyahu 284, 285, 288
 Bentwich, Norman 273
 Ben-Yeroham, Hanokh 294, 308n76
 Ben-Yosef, Shlomo xiii, 231, 311, 314–318, 320–323, 325–330, 332–348, 350n14, 352n56, 353n70, 354n79, 355n83, 356n88
 Ben-Yosef, Tsvi (“Tsama”) 355n86
 Ben-Zvi, Yitshak 17, 21, 263, 270, 284, 325, 326, 329, 337
 Berger, Elmer 120, 127–130, 132, 135, 136
 Bergman, Shmuel Hugo 310n83
 Bergson, Peter — see Kook, Hillel.

- Berkowitz, Eliezer 294, 308n77
 Berlin, Isaiah 104
 Berlin, Meir 54, 113n61, 209, 210, 221,
 223, 225, 229, 230, 232–236, 238,
 247n32, 249, 256, 257, 269, 282,
 284, 287, 295
 Bermuda Conference on Refugees 161
 Bernstein, Philip 126, 129, 135
 Bernstein-Kohan, Jacob 4, 10
Bessarbets 3, 4
 Betar 190, 202, 212, 262–265, 267, 269,
 271, 272, 274, 275, 277, 278, 280–
 282, 289, 290, 293, 311–319, 323,
 327–330, 332, 333, 335–343, 345,
 347, 348n1, 355n86
 Bet-Zouri, Eliyahu 341, 356n89
 Bialik, Chaim Nahman xi, xii, 9–13, 23,
 31, 35n28–30, 39n64, 185–214,
 220n71–72, 262, 264, 269, 273,
 276, 279, 281, 283–285, 291
 “Bialik, Man of the Polemic” 197
 “Bikhrakai Yam” 34n24
 Billikopf, Jacob 88, 89, 92, 93, 96, 103,
 156, 162
 Biltmore Program 135, 137
 Bi-nationalism 90, 159, 163, 165,
 180n35, 190, 230, 273, 297,
 302n36
 “B’Ir HaHareiga” 11, 12, 17, 21, 23–31,
 40n71–72, 186, 195, 216n13
 “Birkat Am” 10, 212
 Birnbaum, Nathan 243n10
 “Birth of Resistance” 27
 “Birth pangs of the Messiah” 239,
 248n40
 “Biryonim” 21
 Bisbee deportations 76
 Black Hundreds 16, 18, 36n39
 Black, Hugo L. 83, 95, 101, 102
 “The Black Banner” 27
 Blau, Amram 245n18
 Blau, Moshe 221, 224, 226, 227, 230–
 232, 234–236, 239, 243n13
 Blaustein, Jacob 122
 Blood libel xiii, 3, 206, 212, 214, 219n59,
 262, 266, 279, 291, 296, 298n4
 Bloom, Sol 56, 57
 «B’Metsulot Yam» 31
 B’nai Brith 4, 5
 Board of Deputies of British Jews 121
 Bodko, Joseph 27
 Borah, William 98
 Borgese, G.A. 107
 Bornstein, Abraham 44
 boycott of Germany 90, 134
 Brandeis, Louis D. 56, 75–80, 83–88,
 90, 92, 93–96, 98–101, 105, 107,
 110n31, 118, 138n6, 151, 192
 Brenner, Yosef Hayim 12, 17, 28, 29, 35,
 71, 74, 195, 211, 328
 Breuer, Isaac 221, 224, 226, 227, 232–
 236, 238, 242n7, 243n10, 246n25,
 246n28, 252, 255
 Breuer, Joseph 53, 224
 Breuer, Solomon 222
 Brewer, Sam Pope 166, 167
 Brickner, Balfour 126, 129, 184n71
 Briscoe, Robert 331
 Brit Emunim 233, 246n25–26, 255
 Brit HaBiryonim 202, 210, 212, 218n47,
 263, 267, 269, 273, 275, 279, 284,
 285, 291, 301n29, 306n64, 307n70,
 308n72, 310n86, 314, 335, 342
 Brit HaHayal 266
 British Guiana 159
 Broadhurst, Joseph 303n41
 Brodetsky, Selig 121, 122, 139n14–
 15, 142n46, 245n18–19, 302n38,
 303n44
 Brodt, Shmuel 221
 Broun, Heywood 91
Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka
 102
 Bund 7, 17, 18, 21, 24, 30, 33, 37
 Bunim, Yitzhak 49
 Burack, Aaron 68
 Burla, Yehuda 300n18
 Bushe, Grattan 305n59, 325

- Butler, Pierce 76
 Butmi, G.V. 15, 16
 Buxton, Frank 98
- C.I.D. 268, 279, 280, 293, 303n41, 310n86
 Cahan, Ya'akov 21
Call it Sleep 29
 Cardozo, Benjamin Nathan 75, 76, 78, 83–85, 87, 88, 94, 103, 156
 Carmon, Moshe 268
 Catledge, Turner 103, 171, 172, 183n61, 183n63–64, 184n68
 Catskill Mts. bungalow colonies 63
 Central Conference of American Rabbis 118, 156, 178n20
 Chagall, Marc 186
 Chamberlain, Joseph 6, 34n13
 Chamberlain, Neville 88, 92, 339
 Chancellor, John 273
 Chmielnicki, Bogdan 8, 12
 Christian Council on Palestine 135
 Churchill White Paper (1922) 139n11
 Churchill, Winston xiv-note 1, 120, 140n20, 162, 175, 180n39, 271
 Cleveland, Grover 5, 31
 Cohen, Benjamin V. 86, 88, 94, 112n52, 112n55
 Cohen, Haim 304n47
 Cohen, Hermann ix, xiv-note 2
 Cohen, Lionel 131
 Cohen, Morris R. 82
 Cohon, Samuel S. 119
 Colonial Office 192, 305n59, 324–326, 331
 Columbus Platform 119
 Commemorative stamps 201, 343
 Committee for a Jewish Army 125, 129, 131, 134
 Communists 114n72, 125, 263, 264, 270, 276, 295, 299
 “The Congress Poem” 185
 Corcoran, Tom 75, 76, 84, 85, 89, 94–97
- Corday, Charlotte 279, 303
 “Cos Cob formula” 129, 131
 Council for American Judaism 132
 Council of Torah Sages 222, 225–227, 231, 232, 235–239, 244n13, 247n38
 Court “packing” plan 96
 Cowen, Joseph 14
 Crabites, Pierre 111n37
 de Crèvecoeur, J. 22
 Cronbach, Abraham 127, 141n26
 Crozier, William P. 322, 350n31
 Cummings, Homer 85, 92, 95
 Cunliffe-Lister, Philip 110n29, 277
 Currivan, Gene 171
- Dachau 163, 166
Daniel Deronda x
 “Daniel in the Lion’s Den” 7
 Danziger, Felix 261
 Danziger, Yitshak 342
 Darwish, Issa 280, 292, 296, 308n77
 Dashevsky, Pinhas 7, 34n17
Davar 188, 189, 201, 211, 262, 268, 270, 274, 275, 279, 280, 286, 287, 292, 311, 317, 334, 345
 Davitt, Michael 5, 25
 “The Day after the Pogrom” 27
 de Haan, Yisrael Ya'akov 296, 309n83
 de Haas, Jacob 28, 80, 109n11
 De Sola Pool, David 182n59
 “Defending Hearth and Home” 28
Der Tog 334
 Devaney, John P. 76
 “Diaspora nationalism” 129
Die Juden der Gegenwart 16
 Dizengoff, Meir 203, 208–210, 261, 262, 264, 282–286, 289, 304n51, 306n66
 Dmowski, Roman 45
Do'ar HaYom 190, 201, 272, 286, 287
 Dobkin, Eliyahu 338, 353n69
 Dotan, Shmuel 295

- Douglas, William O. 97, 100, 102
 “The Dream of My People” 64
Dreamers of the Ghetto 21
 Dreyfus, Alfred 208, 219n59, 279, 280
 Druyanov, Alter 264
 Druyanov, Shimon 201, 203, 208, 210,
 268, 279, 280, 283, 284, 303n42
 Dryfoos, Orvil 103, 104, 171, 174,
 177n5
 Dryfoos, Susan 103, 145
 Dubinsky, David 86
 Dubnow, Simon 9–11, 16, 18, 22, 23,
 25, 29, 35n29, 39n58, 41n73, 213
 Dubow, Joseph 62
 Duma 16, 17, 20, 45
 Dushinsky, Yosef 225–227, 231, 235–
 237
 Dvir 185, 186, 191, 197
- East Africa colony (Uganda) 6, 13, 21,
 147, 148, 223
 Eden, Anthony 124, 126, 130, 131, 133,
 139n19, 140n20, 160
 “Ehad Ehad V’En Roeh” 25
 Ehrmann, Shlomo 221
 Eichmann trial 174
 Eichmann, Adolf 245n19
 Eisendrath, Maurice 126
 “El HaTsipor” 10, 23
 Eliash, Mordekhai 281–283, 285, 292,
 304n47, 305n57
 Eliav, Arie 218n50
 Eliot, George x, xiv-note 6
 Elon, Amos 345
 Elon, Binyamin 309n80
 El-Sana, Talab 356n89
 Ely, Joseph B. 77
 Emergency Committee for Zionist
 Affairs 123, 128
 Emergency Regulations 315, 319
 Endecja — see National Democratic
 Party.
 Epstein, Eliyahu (Elath) 164, 166, 167,
 168, 170, 181n48, 182n53
 Ernst, Morris 86
 Errera, Leo 25
 Eshel, Aryeh 345
 Eshkol, Levi 21, 343
Essays on Old and New Judaism 9
Etsel — see Irgun Tsva’i Leumi.
 Evian Conference on Refugees 84, 88,
 90, 116, 138n3, 157, 339
 Evseksiii — see “Yevseksia”.
- Falastin* 317
 Farley, James 94
 Farmers’ Federation 270, 288
 Fascism 98, 109n19, 190, 265, 266, 271,
 272, 174, 276
 FDR — see Roosevelt, Franklin D.
 Feigin, Rivka 267
 Feinstein, Meir 354n75
 Feis, Herbert 111n35
 Feisal, Emir 78, 108n8
 Feiwei, Berthold 25
 Fikhman, Ya’akov 27, 185, 200, 201
 Fineshriber, William 126, 129, 132,
 140n24
 First Judean Regiment 24, 300n16
 Fishman, Yehuda Leib (Maimon) 223–
 225, 243n8–9, 249, 304n49, 323
 Flexner, Bernard 120, 139n12
The Flint Plan 130
 Foreign Office 142n40, 326, 339
 Fourth Aliya 271
 Fox (Fuks), Joseph 64
 Frank, Jerome 124, 125, 140n21
 Frank, Leo 151
 Frankel, David 340
 Frankfurter, Felix xii, 75–107, 108n9,
 109n11, 109n16, 110n24, 110n26,
 110n29, 111n35–37, 112n48,
 113n60–61, 113n66, 114n76, 125,
 156, 157, 171, 357
 Frankfurter, Marion 78, 87, 104
 Frankists 289

- Freehof, Solomon 126, 127, 136
 Friedman, Barry 66
 Friedman, Joan 66
 Friedman, Nathan 66
 Friedman, Shelly 66
 Frishman, David 7
From a Fascist's Notebook 272
 Frug, Shimon 6, 7, 35n29
 Fuks, Chaya 58
 Fuks, Nathan 58
 "Funeral of the Zaddik" 28

Galoot 346
 "Galut Zion" 226, 234n10
 "Gam B'Hit'aroto L'Eineikhem" 191, 199
 Gandhi, Mohandas 28, 238
 Garfinkel, Zvi 340
 Gedud Moriya 354n79
Gegenwartsarbeit 21
 Gelber, Yoav 294
 General Zionists 192, 199, 202, 245n22,
 264, 266, 269–271, 273, 290
 Gerer Rebbe 49, 55, 56, 60, 68, 72n34,
 73n38, 224, 225, 228, 231, 235–
 237, 244n13, 247n35
 Gerstenfeld, Norman 126, 128, 132
 Gilon, Alon 294
 Glickson, Moshe 335
 Gluckstein, Louis 131, 141n34
 Gnessin, Uri Nissan 211
 Goebbels, Josef 162, 292
 Goebbels, Magda 296
 Gold, Ze'ev 54, 221, 246n28
 Goldart, Avraham 234
 Goldberg, Arthur 102–104
 Goldenson, Samuel 126, 127, 129, 131,
 132, 134, 135
 Goldman, Mordecai 56, 57
 Goldman, Robert 119, 156
 Goldman, Solomon 116
 Golomb, Eliyahu 212, 268, 269, 274,
 279, 292, 337, 338
 "Golus" 27

 Gomel (Homel) 14, 17, 21, 23, 31
 Gonta, Ivan 8
 Goodman, Harry A. 234, 235
 Gordon, Judah Leib 31
 Gorki, Maxim x, 4, 26, 27, 39n65
 "Green Line" 295
 Greenbaum, Edward 117, 121, 165, 170
 Greenberg, Hayim 28
 Greenberg, Irving 62
 Greenberg, Uri Zvi 188–191, 199,
 214, 215n12, 216n14, 219n69,
 263, 270–272, 284, 293, 301n34,
 305n55, 313, 314, 328, 340
 Grodzinski, Chaim Ozer 225, 228–232,
 235–237, 239, 240, 244n15, 251,
 252
 Grosman, Noam 354n79
 Gruenbaum, Yitshak 232, 245n22, 265,
 266, 278, 305n58
 Guedella, Philip 28
 Guggenheim, Daniel 148
 Gur (Ger) dynasty 44, 48, 49, 55, 56, 62,
 67, 69, 72n38
 Gurion, Yitshak 342–344, 354n78
 Gush Katif expulsion 296
 Gutman, Nahum 200

HaAlila HaGedola 293, 308n76
ha'avara agreement 275–277, 301n34
HaBoker 334
 "HaBreikha" 213
Hadashot 334
HaEmet Kodemet LaShalom 287
 Hagana 21, 24, 166, 268, 270, 290–292,
 296, 297, 312, 316, 337–339, 341,
 343, 345, 347, 350n15, 354n79
 Hagana-Irgun agreement 290
 Haining, Robert H. 322–325, 327–330,
 336
 Haj Amin al-Husseini (the Mufti) 91,
 111n37
 Hakim, Eliyahu 341, 345, 356n89
 Halpern, Uriel (Ratosh) 339, 353n70

- Halutzim 189, 281, 334
 Haman 191, 216n18
 "HaMatmid" 10
 HaMeiri, Avigdor 201, 205, 263
HaMetsuda 349n8
 Hanita 311, 312
HaOlam 277, 284
 HaPo'el 266, 269, 270, 284
 HaPoel HaMizrachi 226, 238, 270, 284
HaPoel HaTsa'ir 195, 264, 275
 HaPoel HaTsa'ir 270
 Harlap, Ya'akov 245n16
 Harvard University 81
HaShiloah 8
 HaShomer 21, 297, 313
 HaShomer HaTsa'ir 195, 263
 Hassidim 27, 219n61
HaTekufa 23
 "HaTikva" 37n49, 169, 332
HaTor 287
HaTsofeh 334
havlaga 311, 312, 317, 318, 326, 328,
 329, 334, 335, 337, 340, 341, 347,
 350n18
 Hay, John 4, 5
HaYarden 284, 286, 338, 340
HaZeman 12, 195, 281
Hazit HaAm 202, 203, 263, 267, 273–
 275, 293
Hazon Ehad HaLigyonot 190
 Hearst, William Randolph 5
Hebrew Encyclopedia 291
 Hebrew Language Council 26, 185, 193
 Hebrew Union College 115, 137, 170
 Hebrew Writers' Association 185, 186,
 188, 195, 201, 202
 Hebron pogrom 28, 53, 190, 271
 Heidelberg University 81
Heint 205
 Heller, Chaim 55
 Heller, James 119, 123, 126–128, 136,
 137
 Helporn, Michael 7
 Helsingfors Conference 21, 34, 38n54
 Henkin, Louis 104
 Henkin, Yosef Eliyahu 244n15
 Henriques, Basil 131
 Herut Party 290, 341
 Herzl, Theodor 6, 8, 13, 14, 21, 22, 24,
 25, 28, 31, 34n13, 36n36, 118, 119,
 147, 148, 151, 212, 217n34, 222,
 223, 274, 282, 313, 343
 Herzog, Isaac Halevi 62, 229, 231–233,
 235, 236, 239, 241, 246n28, 251,
 324–328, 351n44
 Herzog, Joel 53
 Herzog, Sarah 62
 Hexter, Maurice 123, 132, 305n58
 "Hierosolyma est perdita" x
 Hildesheimer Seminary 228
Hilf 7
 Hillman, Sidney 86
 Hirsch, Samuel Raphael 222, 224
 Hirszenberg, Samuel 27
 Histadrut 79, 80, 88, 208, 212–214,
 252, 261–263, 265, 266, 268, 270,
 271, 274, 277, 280, 282, 288, 289,
 304n51, 306n64, 334, 335
History of the Jewish People 29
 Hitler, Adolf 41n72, 55, 58, 59, 80, 81,
 84, 90, 92, 98, 101, 105, 115, 133,
 153, 154, 157, 159, 161, 162, 175,
 179n27, 179n29, 191, 201, 230,
 234, 237, 263, 264, 268, 274–277,
 282, 297, 339, 340
 Hoenig, Sidney 68
 Holmes, Jr., Oliver Wendell xii, 75–79,
 85, 87, 104, 105
 Holocaust ix, xi, xii, 28, 30, 31, 58, 72n38,
 101, 105, 106, 113n61, 133, 134,
 137, 160, 161, 163, 171, 175, 241,
 245n19, 297, 343
 "homa u'migdal" 311
Homeland or State: The Real Issue 119
 Hopkins, Harold 96, 97
 Hore-Belisha, Leslie 322
 Hos, Dov 212, 268, 279, 292
 Hoter-Yishai, Aharon 317, 319, 320

- Houston declaration 136
 "Hu Amar La" 17
 Hughes, Charles E. 95
 Hull, Cordell 56, 80, 133, 134
 Hungarian Jews 71n11, 160
 "Hut Rahmones" 6, 35n29
 Hyrcanus 208, 219n61
- Ibn Gabirol, Shlomo 200
 Ibn Saud, Abdul Aziz 335
 Ickes, Harold L. 75, 76, 85, 86, 94–97, 99, 109n19, 133
Ikveta d'Meshiha 240, 247n 35
 illegal immigration 290, 297, 307n69, 349n8
 Imber, Naaftali Herz 37n49
In Golus Bei Yiddin 243n10
 Industrial Removal Office 146
Intifada 295, 296, 346
 Irgun B 312
 Irgun Tsva'i Leumi ("Etsel") 290, 312, 317, 347
 "The Iron Wall" 24
Is This the Way? 126, 128
Iskra 18
 Israel xii, 29, 31, 37n49, 40n69, 53, 62, 73, 106, 108n9, 115, 117, 118, 126, 128, 134, 137, 145, 148, 155, 169–174, 176, 182n59, 185, 188, 193, 211, 223, 224, 228, 230, 236, 240, 241, 244n15, 249–251, 255–257, 272, 287, 289–292, 295–297, 307n71, 308n77, 328, 333, 334, 341–348
 Israel and individualization 347, 356n88
 Israel and national memory 291, 307n71
 Israel, Edward 123
 Ittleson, Henry 123, 132
- 211, 212, 214, 229, 262–276, 278–281, 286, 288–291, 293–295, 297, 298n4, 299n8, 299n16, 301n30, 303n45, 312–315, 318, 322, 324, 326, 327, 329–332, 334, 336–343, 346–348, 348n4, 351n44, 353n74
 Jackson, Robert H. 95, 97, 99–101
 Jacobi, S. Y. 303n43, 338
 James, Edwin 166, 167
 JDC — see American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.
Jerusalem Awaits 314
 "Jew Deal" 82
 Jewish Agency 24, 28, 115, 116, 119, 122, 123, 164, 166–168, 180n35, 181n48, 190, 192, 193, 203, 206, 208, 213, 221, 225, 226, 229–232, 237, 245n22, 259, 261, 264, 267, 268, 271, 273, 275, 281, 288, 297, 299n12, 302n35, 305n58–59, 311, 312, 317, 318, 323, 326, 329, 334–336, 338, 341
 Jewish Army 17, 106, 123, 125–129, 131, 134, 135, 159, 181, 337
 Jewish Brigade 162, 175
Jewish Chronicle 234, 323, 334
 Jewish Commonwealth xiii, 24, 90, 118, 121, 135, 187, 227, 228, 230, 232, 239, 270, 272, 275, 312, 336
 Jewish Legion 21, 24, 267, 270, 272, 300n16, 312
 Jewish National Fund 199, 229, 232, 249, 262, 282, 326
 Jewish self-defense 8, 9, 12, 16–19, 21, 23, 35n28–29, 36n34, 36n38, 40n71, 186, 266, 270, 311
 Jewish Territorialist Organization 22
 Jewish Theological Seminary 60, 66, 144, 169, 182n59
The Jewish War 299n10
 "The Joint" — see American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.
 Joseph, Bernard (Dov) 267, 292, 302n35, 305n59
- Jabotinsky, Vladimir 8, 12, 23, 24, 26, 39n64, 40n71, 109n11, 186–188, 190, 192, 195–199, 201–207, 209,

- Joseph, Philip 317, 319–321, 327, 331
 Josephus Flavius 265, 299n10
 “Judah Today, Judah Tomorrow” 313
 Judenrat 57, 297, 310n84
 “Jug of Tears” 28, 40n69
Julius Caesar 200, 219n61
- Kafka, Franz x
 Kahan Commission 308n77
 Kalei, Hanokh 340
 Kallen, Horace 161, 175
 Kaplan, Dora 279, 303n43
 Kaplan, Eliezer 203, 264, 278, 286
 Kaplan, Mordecai 159, 167
 Karelitz, Avraham Yehoshua 237, 247n35
 Karni, Yehuda 210
 Kasher, Menahem 56, 57
 “Kastner Trial” 292, 308n76
 Katsav, Moshe 347
 Katz, Ben-Zion 191, 195, 196, 199, 203–207, 210, 220n72, 264, 265, 278–281, 283–287, 292, 297, 334
 Katzenelson, Yitshak 28
 Katzir, Efraim 344
 Katznelson, Berl 21, 40n72, 188, 202–204, 211, 212, 220n70, 262, 264, 265, 287, 288, 291, 292, 296, 297, 306n64, 311, 312, 335, 338, 352n62
 Katznelson, Yosef 267–270, 273, 274, 278, 280, 283, 284, 326, 333
 “Kelapei Tish'im V'Tish'a” 189
Kelev Bayit 189
Kemo Yoman 219n 69
 Kennedy, John F. 102
 Kennet, Max 294
Keturvim 186, 195–197, 199, 200
 “Kibbush HaAvoda HaIvrit” 313
Kiddush HaHayim 240
 Kiddush HaShem 41n79, 240
kinus 185, 186, 196, 197, 200, 213
 Kishinev xi, 1–8, 10, 12–17, 19–32, 34n13, 35n29, 36n38, 38n56, 39n59, 39n65, 40n72, 41n76, 42n79, 147, 186, 216n13, 227
 Kishinev Historical Commission 10
 Klarman, Yosef 297
 Klausner, Joseph 8, 10, 12, 25, 34n24, 35n30, 201, 210, 212–214, 263, 279, 282, 284, 291, 292, 313, 337
 Klausner, Margot 292, 294
 Klinov, Yeshayahu 39n60
Knessia Gedola 227, 239, 244n13
 Kofer HaYishuv 230
 Kohler, Kaufmann 118
Kol Yisrael 231
 Kollek, Teddy 344
 Kook, Avraham 208, 225, 226, 229, 233, 237, 245n16, 249, 281–289, 297, 298, 304n47, 306n64, 309n80, 309n83
 Kook, Hillel (Peter Bergson) 125, 81n45, 209, 210, 212, 213
 Korolenko, Vladimir 4, 7
 Kosher supervision 51
 Kotler, Aharon 227
 Kotzer, Aryeh 317, 318
 Kovner, Abba 28
 Krestin, Lazar 27
Kristallnacht 28n72, 92, 93, 157, 180n33, 233, 246n27, 248n40, 353
 Krivoshein, Moshe (Galili) 339
 Krock, Arthur 156, 161
 Krushevan, Pavolachi 3, 7, 15, 16
 “Kula Sheli” 339
- Lahover, Pinhas 25, 185, 195, 198
 “LaMenatseah Al HaMeholot” 25
 Landau, Anna 206
 Landau, Moshe 294
 Landau, Ya'akov 225
 Landis, James 85
 Landman, Isaac 137
 Lansburgh, Sidney 122
 Lasker, Bruno 120

- Laski, Harold J. 76, 77, 99
 Laski, Neville 131
 Lawrence, David 66, 85
 Lazar, Haim 343, 355n80
 Lazaron, Morris 115–136, 142n40, 159, 160, 162, 164
 LEHI 291, 307n71, 309n80, 341, 345–347, 354n79, 356n89
 Lehman, Herbert 83, 88, 92, 98, 123
 Leibowitz, Yeshayahu 297
 Lelyveld, Arthur J. 144, 184n67
 Lenin, Vladimir Ilyich 18, 26, 272, 297, 303n43
Letters from an American Farmer 22
 Levenberg, Zalman – 356n86
 Levendal 1, 3
 Levin, “Reb” Aryeh 284, 304n53
 Levin, Harry 326
 Levin, Shmaryahu 193
 Levin, Yitshak Meir 57, 225, 226, 230, 231
 Levinthal, Israel 137
 Levy, Joseph 180n35
 Lewin, Aharon 227, 228
 Lieberman, Yisrael 323
 “Lifnei Aron HaSefarim” 25
 Likud Party 293, 344
 Lilien, E. M. 27
 Lippmann, Walter 82, 84, 93, 105, 109n16, 118
 Lishanski, Yosef 328
 Livneh, Eliezer 292
Lo Ukhel L’HaHashot 206, 279, 281, 283
 Lodge, Henry Cabot 104, 151
 Lofban, Yitshak 195, 196
 London *Times* 2, 4, 32n3, 122
 Lord Cranborne 130
 Lord Halifax 131
 Lovett, Robert 169
 Lowell, A. Lawrence 98, 112n53
 Lubianker, Pinhas (Lavon) 288
 Lubinski, Haim 338
 Lubotski, Binyamin (Eliav) 333
 Lufban, Yitshak 264, 275, 276, 288, 296
 MacDonald, Malcolm 233, 234, 273, 322, 324, 325, 327, 328, 330, 331, 335, 336, 339, 340, 352n56
 Machlis, David (Peter) 66
 Machlis, Joel 66
 Machlis, Julius 66
 Mack, Julian 78–80, 83, 86, 99, 107, 109n11, 110n26
 MacLeish, Archibald 82
 MacMichael, Harold 311, 324, 325, 327, 328, 331, 352n56
 Magnes, Judah 19, 90, 123, 129–131, 137, 158–160, 163–165, 169, 176, 180n35, 182n48, 190, 297, 310n84
 Mainz 31, 41n79
Manchester Guardian 81, 322
 Mapai 40n72, 195, 202, 212, 263–265, 268–270, 274, 276, 277, 280, 286–289, 292, 293, 297, 298n6, 305n58, 306n64, 311, 323, 328, 335
 Margoshes, Samuel 129
 Markel, Lester 167
 Marshall, George 101, 168
 Marshall, Louis 20, 117, 178n14
 Masada 41n75
 Mashiah Ben-Yosef 334
Masoret V’Herut 239
 Mathews, Herbert 166
 May Laws 3, 32n3
 Mazeh, Ya’akov 12
 McCarran, Pat 99
 McCarthy, Joseph S. 106, 114n72
 McCormick, Anne O’Hare 155, 164, 182n48
 McDonald, James 84, 178n23, 179n29
 Medjid, Abdul El-Kurdi 207, 212, 280, 285, 288, 292, 303n45–46, 308n77
 “Megilat HaEsh” 25
Megilat HaSikrikin 279
 Meir, Ya’akov 210, 280–282, 285, 288, 298n6, 324

- Meirov, Shaul (Avigur) 267, 279
The Melting Pot 22
 Mendele Moher Seforim (Abrahmovitz) 7
 Mendlowitz, Shruga Feivel 56
Mercy of a Rude Stream 29
 Meriminski, Yisrael (Merom) 286
 Messersmith, George 117, 120
 Meyerson, Golda (Meir) 288, 292
 Migration to the U.S. 23, 38n51
 Milikovsky, Natan (Netanyahu) 282–289, 297, 304n50
 “military Zionism” 339
Millersville School District v. Gobitis 113n59
 Mintz, Binyamin 225–228, 243n10, 243n13
 Mintzberg, Leib 227, 228, 244n13
 Mishna 191, 216n15, 217n29, 249, 256
 Mitnagdim 208, 219n61
 Mizrachi xii, xiii, 14, 51, 54, 113n61, 192, 199, 208–210, 221–226, 229–240, 243n9, 246n28, 255, 257, 265, 269, 273, 284, 287, 288, 323
 “The Modern Hep! Hep! Hep!” x
 Modernity and Judaism ix
 Moldovsky, Moshe 313, 314
Moment 205, 262, 267, 279
 Montagu, Samuel 18
 Montefiore, Claude 21, 121, 122, 125, 202
 Montefiore, Moses 218n44
 Montor, Henry 117
 Morgenthau, Jr., Henry 85, 90, 94, 98, 154, 159, 179n25
 Morgenthau, Sr., Henry 88–89, 91, 93, 106, 107, 118, 156, 179n27
Moznayim 185, 186, 194–196, 198, 200, 201, 205
 “M’tai Midbar” 10, 212
 Munich Agreement 339
 Munkaczer Rebbe 245n18
 Murphy, Frank 76, 97, 100
 Murray, Wallace 120, 134
 Mussolini 80, 98, 157, 237, 271, 272, 297
 “Nahalat Shlomo” 342
 Nathan, H. L. 331
Nation 81, 86, 89, 125, 151
 National Democratic Party 45
 National Refugee Service 122
 Navon, Yitshak 308n77
 Nazi persecution 84, 93, 147, 157, 275 – See also Hitler, Holocaust, Kristallnacht
 Nedava, Yosef 342
 “The Negation of the Galut (Exile, Diaspora)” 39n58, 41n75, 222
 Nemirov 12, 31
 Nerya, Moshe Zvi 212–213
 Netanyahu, Ben-Zion 284, 291
 Netanyahu, Binyamin 356n89
Netivot 284
 Neturei Karta 245n18
 Neumann, Emanuel 302n36
 New Deal 82, 83, 86, 88, 89, 124, 156
New Kuzari 244n14
New Republic 76, 82
New Statesman 296
 New York City Kehillah 177n13
New York Times xii, 22, 86, 88, 90, 93, 97, 102, 106, 118, 120, 125, 127, 130, 131, 143, 145, 150, 155, 159, 160, 168, 169, 176
 New Zionist Organization 290, 312
 Nicholas II 5, 13, 14, 16, 18, 19, 36n36
 Niles, David 97
 NILI 301n26, 328, 344
 Nilus, Sergei 16
 Nissenbaum, Yitshak 239, 240
 Nissim, Yitshak 251, 342
 Niv, David 343
 Nordau, Max 13, 14, 198
 Norman, Edward 120
 Norris, George W. 84, 96, 99

- Northern Shomron expulsion 296
- Oakes, John 174
- Oath not to "rebel against the nations" 244n15
- Ochs, Adolph S. 90, 91, 118, 125, 143–145, 150–155, 174, 175, 179n27
- Odessa 8, 9, 17, 24, 38n56, 185
- "Old Isaiah" 88
- "Old Yishuv" 28, 224, 226, 227, 236, 244n15, 245n18
- "Olei HaGardom" 344, 356n89
- Oneg Shabbat gatherings 26, 185, 190
- Operation Peace for the Galilee 294
- Oslo Accords xiii, 295
- Ostrovsky, Moshe 210
- Pale of Settlement xi, 14, 20, 197, 198, 217n33
- Palestine x–xiii, 6, 12–15, 19, 21, 22, 24, 28, 31, 38n55, 40n72, 49, 53, 57, 64, 68, 78–80, 88, 90, 92–94, 101, 105, 108n9, 111n37, 113n61, 115–126, 128–131, 133–136, 139n11, 142n43, 147–149, 152–154, 156–161, 164–169, 176, 178n14, 178n23, 180n35, 181n44, 185, 187, 190, 194, 205–208, 210, 211, 213, 221–241, 245n22, 259, 261, 263–282, 285, 287, 290, 291, 295, 297, 299n14, 300n16, 301n26, 302n36, 307n69, 311, 312, 317, 318, 321–324, 326, 327, 330, 332, 335–341, 347, 351n44
- Palestine partition 90, 116, 164, 166–169, 176, 226, 229, 230, 232, 239, 244n13, 245n23, 291, 312, 335, 339
- Palestine Post* 266, 287, 323, 334
- Palmach 290
- Pann, Abel (Pfefferman) 27, 40n69
- "pariah people" xi
- Paris Peace Conference 78
- Parkinson, Cosmo 325
- A Partisan Guide to the Jewish Problem* 184n71
- Passfield White Paper 273, 282
- Patriotism and Zionism* 148
- Peel Commission (Royal Commission on Palestine) 8, 91, 94, 158, 226, 229, 239, 244n13
- Peretz, I. L. 35n30
- Perilman, Nathan A. 144, 145
- Perlow, Yehuda Aryeh 49
- Petlyura, Semen 23, 301n26, 303n43
- Philby, H. St. John 180n35
- Philipson, David 127, 128, 132
- Pilchik, Ely 134
- Pilsudski, Jozef 225
- Pines, Ofer 295
- Pinsker, Leo 8
- Pittsburgh Platform 118, 119, 127, 136, 151
- Plehve, Vyacheslav von 2–6, 13–15, 18, 36n36–37
- "plugot giyus" 312
- Poalei Agudas Israel 225, 244n14
- Poalei Zion 7, 14, 16, 17, 21, 270
- "Poems of Wrath" 12, 190, 196, 212, 216n13
- pogroms ix, xi, 1–10, 12, 14–25, 27–32, 38n56, 39n59–60, 39n65, 41n76, 42n79, 45, 46, 53, 73, 147, 151, 186, 216n13, 262, 301n26, 303n43, 337, 340
- Pogrovinsky, Yohanan 276, 296, 302n35
- Poilisher Shteibel 49, 51, 67, 69
- Polish Jewry 45, 70
- "Post-Zionist" historians 346, 356n86
- Potocki, Jerzy 98
- Prato, Raffaello 25
- "Preida" 206
- Proskauer, Joseph 112n48, 125, 128, 142n43, 165
- Protocols of the Elders of Zion* xi, 15, 36n39, 82

- Quotas for Jews 79, 84, 98, 157, 218n50, 314
- Raaben 1, 3, 15
- Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary 51
- Rabbis' march on Washington 58
- "The Rabbis' Speech" 3
- Rabin, Leah 295
- Rabin, Yitzhak xiii, 290, 295, 296, 309n80
- Rabinovitz, Ya'akov 210
- Rabinowitz, Rav 344
- Radler-Feldman, Yehoshua 288, 291, 306n63
- Ramon, Ilan 30
- Raskin, Abraham H. 155
- "Rav Binyamin" — see Radler-Feldman.
- Raviv, Avishai 295
- Ravnitski, Yehoshua 9, 12, 187, 188, 193–195, 200, 201, 203, 210, 264, 268, 280
- Raziel, David 312, 314, 333, 338, 340–342
- Reconstructionist* 159
- Reds vs. Whites (Russian Revolution) 208, 219n61
- Reed, Stanley 83, 95
- Reform Judaism 119, 128, 136, 137, 151, 173, 236
- "Refugees" 27, 80, 84, 90, 94, 103, 115, 116, 122, 154, 156, 157, 159, 161, 165, 166, 169, 172, 211, 257, 339
- Reichert, Irving 127
- Reines, Yitshak Ya'akov 223
- "Re'itikhem Shuv B'Kotser Yedkhem" 185, 194
- Remez, David 288, 335
- Repetur, Berl 263, 274
- Reshumot* 39n60
- Reston, James 144, 166–168, 172, 174
- Retsab Arlosoroff* 293
- Revel, Bernard 51–55, 60, 63, 64
- Revisionist-Zionists xiii —See also Jabotinsky
- Ribalow, Menahem 198
- Riga 29
- Riggs, Alfred 206, 279, 280, 303n41
- Rokah, Israel 334, 338
- Rommel, Erwin 128, 129, 134
- Ron-Feder-Amit, Galila 347
- Roosevelt, Eleanor 129, 133
- Roosevelt, Franklin D. xii, 59, 75–89, 91–101, 103–108, 112n49, 113n60, 113n66, 116, 124, 130, 133, 138n6, 140n20, 155–157, 159, 161, 162, 175, 180n39
- Roosevelt, Theodore 5, 18, 19, 22
- Rose, Jacqueline 346
- Rosen, Pinhas 292, 297
- Rosenau, William 130
- Rosenberg, Adolph 132
- Rosenberg, James 120, 131, 135
- Rosenblatt, Yossele 64
- Rosenblatt, Zvi 205–208, 210, 214, 267, 268, 278, 280, 281, 283, 284, 286, 292–294, 308n72
- Rosenfeld, Shalom 314, 316, 332, 333, 341, 345, 349n14, 355n83, 356n86
- Rosenfeld, Irving 65
- Rosenheim, Jacob 221, 222, 224, 227–232, 234–238, 243n10, 244n14, 247n37, 257
- Rosensohn, Samuel J. 109n11
- Rosenstein, Shlomo 280
- Rosenthal, Abraham M. 170, 174, 183n67
- Rosenwald, Lessing 136
- Rosenwald, William 132
- Rosenzweig, Franz ix
- Rosenzweig, Ted 63
- Rosh Pina 311, 313–316, 319–321, 323, 332, 335, 340–343, 345, 348, 349n14, 350n15, 356n86, 356n88
- "Rosh Pina" 355n86, 356n88
- Roskies, David 12
- Rotblum, David 205, 207, 209

- Rotenberg, Mordekhai 227
 Roth, Henry 29
 Rothschild, Anthony de 121, 122, 124, 127, 130, 131
 Rothschild, Dick 117
 Rothschild, Dorothy de 31
 Rothschild, Evelina de 206
 Rothschild, James 240
 Rothschild, Nathan 18
 Rothschild (Lord) 159, 178n14
 Royal Commission on Palestine — see Peel Commission.
 Rubashov, Zalman (Shazar) 288
 Ruppin, Arthur 16, 211
 Russo-Japanese war 18
 Rutenberg, Pinhas 289
 Rutledge, Wiley 96, 112n49
 Ryan, John 98

 Sabra and Shatila 308n77
 Sacco, Nicola 77, 303n42
 Sacco-Vanzetti 78, 98, 114n76, 151, 279, 303n42
 Sacher, Harry 297
 Sadan, Dov 268
 “saison” 290, 295
 Salvemini, Gaetano 101, 113n60
Samson 289, 314
 Samuel, Edwin 308n72
 Samuel, Horace B. 267
 “Sanbalatim” 265, 299n10
 “*sans-culottisme*” 274, 301n30
 Sasson, Eliyahu 343
 Satmar Rebbe 244n15, 245n18
Saturday Evening Post 124
 Schachtel, Hyman 127, 129, 135
 Schechtman, Joseph 269
 Schein, Avraham 311, 313–328, 332, 342, 344, 350n14, 356n88
 Schiff, Jacob 5, 18, 19, 37n46, 110n31, 118, 147
 Schiff, Otto 124, 131
Schneiderman v. U.S. 113
 Schneiderman, William 100
 Schorr, Daniel 171
 Schwartzbard, Shalom 272, 301n26, 303n43
 Schwartzbart, Yitshak 269
 Scopes Monkey Trial 151
 Second Aliya 12, 21, 31, 195, 196, 270
Sefer HaKitrug V’HaEmuna 349n6
Sefer Shlomo Ben-Yosef 341
 Segal, Moshe 281
 Seixas, Benjamin Mendes 146
 Seligman, Max 292, 293
 Selman, Jerry (Yehuda) 60
 Selman, Victor 46
 Selmanovitz, Abraham Isaac (Zelmanowicz, Abram) xii, 43–56, 48–56, 58–70
 Selmanovitz, Bertha (Brakha) 46, 47, 64, 66
 Selmanovitz (Zelmanowicz), Chana 43–48, 58, 59, 63–65, 69, 70
 Selmanovitz, Esther 46, 61, 62
 Selmanovitz, Miriam 46, 47, 65, 66, 69
 Selmanovitz, Tillie 64
 Selmanovitz, Vita (Ita) 46, 47, 66, 69
 Selmanowitz, Barry 65
 Selmanowitz, Benjamin (Simha Bunim) 46, 47, 62, 65 –
 Selmanowitz, Jack (Yaakov) 46, 47, 65
 Selmanowitz, Louis (Aryeh Leib) 46, 47, 51, 62, 64, 65 –
 Selmanowitz, Morris (Moshe) 46, 47, 63, 64
 Selmanowitz, Victor (Benjamin’s son) 63
 Selmanowitz, Victor (Louis’s son) 64, 65
 Selmanowitz (Straus), Livia 64
 Selmanowicz — see Selmanovitz.
 Semenov E.P. 25
 Shamgar Commission 295, 309n80
 Shamir, Yitshak 308n77, 309n80, 346
 Shamir, Ziva 200
 Shapira, Hayyim Elazar 245n18
 Shapira, Moshe 234

- Shapiro, Karl 10, 244n13, 247n38
- Sharett, Moshe 21, 206, 230, 235, 278,
286, 302n40, 305n58, 323, 324,
329, 336–338
- Sharon, Ariel 209, 295, 296, 308n77
- Shavit, Ya'acov 293
- Shaw, Abraham 130, 136
- Shaw, George Bernard 271
- Shazar, Zalman 27, 288
- She'arith Israel Synagogue 169, 182n59
- “sheep to the slaughter” 17
- Sheib, Israel (Eldad) 339
- Shertok, Moshe — see Sharett.
- Shiels, Drummond 272
- “Shir Ben-Yosef” 353n73, 355n86
- “Shir HaMered” 346, 355n86
- Shitreet, Bekhor 267, 268, 279–282,
291, 292, 303n46
- “Shiva” 206
- Shlaim, Avi 346
- Shlonsky, Avraham 186, 190, 191, 195–
197, 199, 205, 211, 263
- “Shnatayim VaHetsi HaYiti Goleh” 305
- Shoshkes, Chaim 57, 58
- Shragai, S.Z. 221, 226, 231, 235, 238
- Shuckburgh, John Evelyn 325, 328
- Shulman, Abe 62
- Shusterman, Abraham 130, 136
- Silver, Abba Hillel 55, 56, 113n61, 116,
117, 119, 126, 129, 136, 137, 162
- Simon, Ethel (Esther Rivka) 64
- Singer, Isidore 25
- Sirkis, Daniel 208, 210, 265, 279, 283–
285, 297
- Six-Day War 174, 292, 344, 346
- Skolsky, Shlomo 340, 346, 355n86
- Skornik* 4
- Slouschz, Nahum 210
- Smilansky, Moshe 210, 259, 270, 280,
284
- Smith Act 101
- Sofer, Moses 224
- Sokolow, Nahum 192, 199, 206, 277,
278
- Solomon, Gershon 344
- Soloveitchik, Chaim 222
- Soloveitchik, Joseph B. 54, 55, 60, 66–69,
239
- Soloveitchik, Moshe HaLevi 51–54
- Soloveitchik, Yitshak Ze'ev 239, 247n38
- Solzhenitsyn, Alexander 41n76
- Songs of Wrath* 27
- Sonnenfeld, Chaim 224, 225, 235n18
- Sorotzkin, Zalman 227
- Special Night Squads 339
- Spektor, Yitshak Elhanan 9, 34n23
- Spengler, Otto 271
- Spiegel, Esther 62, 63
- Spiegel, Irving 171, 183n61
- Sprinzak, Yosef 263, 335
- SS Kroonland* 43–45
- St. James Conference on Palestine 234,
237
- Stampfer, Shlomo 37n51, 210
- Stavsky, Abraham 204–210, 212–214,
262, 263, 265, 267, 268, 278, 280,
281, 283–287, 289, 290, 292–294,
297, 298, 299n8, 303n46, 304n53,
305n58, 306n63, 307n69, 308n72
- Steinberg, Milton 135, 176, 184n71
- Steinman, Eliezer 186
- Stern, Avraham 317, 318, 332, 333, 338,
339, 341, 346, 347, 350n18, 353n68,
353n70, 353n72
- Stiles, W.C. 25
- Stimson, Henry 76, 77, 79, 101
- Stone, Harlan F. 99–101
- Straus, Nathan 90, 154
- Straus, Oscar 5, 18, 19, 147, 148
- Strauss, Lewis 124, 126, 129, 154, 179n26
- “The Street of the Sixteen” 354n79
- Stroock, Sol 117, 120, 123, 126
- Sulzberger, Arthur H. xii, 18, 19, 86, 88–
95, 97, 103, 104, 106, 107, 111n37,
112n52, 120, 123, 124, 130–132,
143–150, 152–176, 177n5, 179n26,
179n29–30, 181n45, 183n59,
183n61

- Sulzberger, Arthur Ochs 174
 Sulzberger, Cyrus L. 5, 146–148, 161, 163, 170–172, 174, 175, 177n13, 179n27, 181n44, 181n48
 Sulzberger, David 175
 Sulzberger, Iphigene 91, 104, 125, 145, 150, 152–155, 165, 174, 182n59
 Sulzberger, Jeanne 172
 Sulzberger, Mayer 20, 148
 Sulzberger, Rachel P. Hays 146
 Suprasky, Yehoshua 269, 282, 284
 Sutherland, George 83
 “synthetic (practical) Zionism” 21
 Syrkin, Nahum 7, 14
 Szold, Henrietta 26
- Tabacznik, Shlomo 314, and see Ben-Yosef, S.
 Tabacznik, Rahel 346, 352n56
 Tabenkin, Yitshak 274, 288
 Taft, Robert 56
 Tanenbaum-Tamaroff, Mordekhai 290
 Tawney, R.H. 92
 “Tedaism” 244n14
 Tehomi, Avraham 268
 Teitelbaum, Joel 245n18
 Tel Hai 28, 278, 301n26, 328, 330
 “Tel-Hai” 330, 332
 Temple Emanu-El 126, 143–145, 155, 158, 169, 178n19
 Tenenbaum, Yehuda 268, 279, 280 (and see Arazi, Y.)
 Tevet, Shabtai 293, 294, 297, 308n75–76
 Thomas, Norman 120
 Tibi, Ahmed 356n89
 Tidhar, David 292
 Tish’a B’Av 190
 Tlalim, Asher 346
 Tolstoi, Leo 4, 7
 “Torah VaAvoda” 223, 226
 Transjordan 94, 130, 160, 230, 276, 302n36
The Triumph of Shlomo Ben-Yosef 340
Triumph on the Gallows 354
 Trokheim, Ya’akov 227, 228, 244n13
 Truman, Harry S 105, 166, 168, 169
 Trumpeldor, Joseph 24, 28, 272, 300n16, 301n26, 312, 328, 332, 340, 348n1, 352n62, 353n73
 Tschernihovsky, Shaul 42n79, 209, 210, 212
 “Tsanah Lo Zalzal” 25
 Tuchman, Barbara W. 107
 Tulin, Abraham 80
 Twersky, Nahum 191
Two Hundred Years Together 41n76
- Ulua* 218n50
 Union of American Hebrew Congregations 4, 90, 119, 144, 178n20
 Union of Russian People 16
 United Nations 101, 165, 176, 291, 346
 UN Special Committee on Palestine 164, 165
 United Palestine Appeal 90, 116
 “United States of Africa” 90, 155
 Unna, Moshe 234
 Urussov, Serge D. 5, 14, 17, 25
 U. S. State Department 6, 84, 109n19, 111n35, 114n72, 117, 120, 126, 133, 167, 171
 U. S. Supreme Court xii, 46, 56, 75–78, 82, 83, 85, 88, 91, 92, 96–99, 101–104, 106, 107, 112n49, 118, 125, 151, 155, 156, 175, 192, 294, 304n47, 308n77
 Ussishkin, Menahem 21, 22, 199, 203, 262, 269, 277
 Ustrugov V.G. 3
 Uziel, Ben-Zion 210, 229, 281, 282, 284, 285
- Va’ad HaHatsala 56, 72n32
 Va’ad Ha’Ir HaAshkenazi 224, 245n18

- Va'ad HaLeumi 224, 325, 329, 334, 336, 337
 Valero, Joseph Moshe 281, 284, 297, 308n77
 Van Devanter, Willis 83
 Van Paassen, Pierre 131
 Vanzetti, Bartolomeo 77, 303n42
 Vashitz, Efraim 326, 329
VaYebi HaYom 200
 Veblen, Thorstein x
 "V'Haya Ki Timtse'u" 25
 Villard, Oscar G. 81, 125, 140n21, 151
 Vilna Ghetto 29
 Vinshal, Ya'akov 343, 349n12, 355n81
 von Weisl, Wolfgang 273

 Wadi Hawareth 264, 277, 295
 Wainshal, Ya'akov 284
 Waldman, Morris 117, 120, 121
 Waley-Cohen, Robert 124
 Wallace, Henry 58, 120
 War in Lebanon 295
 War Refugee Board 161
 Warburg, Edward 122, 123, 132
 Warburg, Max 120, 123
 Warren, Earl 102, 105, 167
 Warsaw Ghetto 28, 29, 161, 240, 290
 Washington, George 104, 111n37, 146
 Wasserman, Elchonon 227, 240, 243n13, 247n35
 Wauchope, Arthur 27, 226, 275–277, 282, 285, 307n69
 Wavell, Archibald 315, 322, 323
 Weber, Max xi
 Wedgwood, Josiah 267, 331, 336
 Weizmann, Chaim 31, 32, 80, 91, 101, 105, 115–118, 123, 124, 169, 187, 190–193, 198–201, 205, 211, 213, 234, 236, 265–267, 270–276, 278, 302n36, 327, 328, 335, 336, 339, 352n64
 Welles, Sumner 87, 120, 124, 126–129, 131, 133, 134, 160

 Wertheim, Maurice 126, 129–132
West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette 113n59
 Western ("Wailing") Wall 190, 216n15, 281
When a Nation Fights for its Freedom 313
 White Paper (1939) 121, 139n11, 158, 159, 169, 235, 237–240, 258, 260, 271, 273, 282, 340
 White, William A. 85, 87
Why I Am a Non-Zionist 128
 Willen, Joseph 117, 120
 Williamsburg xii, 48–51, 53, 63, 67–69, 71n11, 74n63
 Wilson, Woodrow 76, 78, 88, 113n61, 178n14
 Wingate, Charles Orde 339
 Wise, Isaac Mayer 118, 151
 Wise, Jonah B. 117, 119, 129, 131
 Wise, Stephen 88, 90, 98, 112n55, 115, 116, 119, 123, 125, 128, 133, 136, 178n19–20, 192, 269, 270, 302n40
 Witte, Sergius 18
 Wolf, Lucien ix, 15
 Wolsey, Louis 126–129, 132–136
 Woodhead Commission 230–232
 World Jewish Congress 115, 121, 179n30
 World Union of Zionist-Revisionists 24, 187, 270
 World Zionist Congress 118, 185, 188, 191, 199, 206, 222, 223, 225, 238, 263, 266, 270, 278

 "Yadati B'Leil Arafel" 25
 Yaffe, Eliezer 296
 "Yair" — see Stern, Avraham.
 "Yaldut" 200
 Yale University 81
 "Yatmut" 206
 Yudelevitz, David (Idelovitch) 297
 Yeivin, Yehoshua 267, 271–274, 293, 314, 340, 341

- Yellin, David 210, 282
 “Yes, to Break” 274
 Yeshiva College 52, 54, 55, 68
 Yeshiva University xii, 64, 67
 “Yevseksia” (“Evseksii”) 227, 243n13,
 265, 299n10
 Yiddish 4, 6, 7, 12, 22, 28, 35n30, 44,
 45, 52, 54, 56, 60, 61, 64, 68, 69,
 125, 129, 171, 174, 186, 197, 198,
 201, 215n4, 234, 243n10, 262, 282,
 299n6, 304n50, 318–320, 333, 341
 “Yisarei Avshalom” 355n81
 Yitshaki, Aryeh 310n86
 Yodfat 212
 Yulichman, Shimshon 298n4, 307n72
- Zangwill, Israel 6, 14, 21, 22, 25, 38n55–
 56, 148, 154
 Zelmanovitz — see Selmanovitz.
 Zelmanowicz, Abram — see Selmanovitz,
 Abraham.
 Zelmanowicz, Avigdor 46
 Zelmanowicz, Chana — see Selmanovitz,
 Chana.
 Zelmanowicz, Yehudis 46
 Zemah, Shlomo 196
Zionism: An Affirmation of Judaism 129,
 135
 Zionist Organization of America 28, 88,
 108n9, 115
 Zirelson, Yehuda Leib 227, 228, 244n13
Znanya 3, 15
Zohar 209, 219n61
 Zuckerman, Yitshak 29
 Zuravin, Shalom 313–318, 320, 322,
 328, 332, 342, 350n13