

ISRAEL

STUDIES IN ZIONISM AND THE STATE OF ISRAEL
HISTORY, SOCIETY, CULTURE

The Chaim Weizmann Institute for the Study of Zionism and Israel was set up in 1962 at Tel Aviv University through the initiative and with the assistance of the Executive of the World Zionist Organization, with the aim of furthering the research and the teaching of the history of the Zionist idea, the Zionist movement and the Land of Israel in modern times.

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Summaries

Maoz Azaryahu

“A Brief and Concentrated Image of Our Ambitions and Problems”:
The Israeli Pavilion at the World’s Fair, Brussels 1958

Promoted by state agencies, Israel’s participation in the 1958 World’s Fair was intended to project Israel’s self-image in a prestigious event that displayed the achievements not only of empires and superpowers, but also of small nations. After a short introductory discussion of world’s fairs and Zionist participation in them, the article explores the decision-making process regarding Israel’s participation in the world’s fair and the primary themes of the projected Israeli pavilion. The main part of the article is devoted to describing the pavilion and its interpretation in relevant ideological, political and cultural contexts. The article concludes with a discussion of the evaluation of the pavilion in the Hebrew press.

Sachlav Stoler-Liss and Shifra Shvarts

“Fighting Ignorance and Undeveloped Habits”:
Doctors’ and Nurses’ Conceptions and Practices regarding Immigrants
during the Mass Immigration to Israel, 1949–1956

The more than one million immigrants who arrived in Israel from Europe, Asia and Africa within a relatively short period during the 1950s suffered from a wide array of diseases. The newborn Israeli state located the newcomers in deserted houses, tent camps and other temporary accommodation and mobilized thousands of qualified and unqualified medical staff in an organizational effort to “heal the immigrants,” many of whom came from the death-camps of Europe and refugee camps in the Middle East.

The article discusses the doctors’ and nurses’ cultural assumptions toward the immigrants, on the basis of in-depth interviews with Israeli nurses and doctors who worked with immigrants during the 1950s. Although both immigrants and medical staff were Jewish, there were cultural, ideological and political differences between them. The medical staff viewed the immigrants as a reservoir of disease, poor hygienic habits and ignorance, while considering themselves progressive, modern and rational. Newspapers of the time abounded in descriptions of the immigrants’ bad habits, often depicting their children as skinny and dirty, and as a possible threat to the health of the veteran population. The medical staff endeavored not only to teach the immigrants new hygiene habits but also to change all their previous ways of life, while using a rhetoric that praised cultural differences as colorful components of the melting pot.

Rakefet Zalashik

Pioneering Psychiatry:
Zionist Newcomers and Jewish Psychiatrists in Palestine in the 1920s

The article examines the concept of the “psychopathology of the Jew,” which arose in nineteenth-century European discourse, in the context of Zionist immigrants to Palestine in the 1920s. Through reviewing and analyzing issues such as mental health, immigration, ethnicity, gender and colonialism in Palestine, I claim that the concept of the “psychopathology of the Jew” was reproduced in the psychiatric discourse in the country. However, while in Europe it served to indicate the inferiority of the Jews and to exclude them from the civil and political spheres, in Palestine it came to symbolize the superiority of the Zionist Jews to the native population: the veteran Jewish population (the old Yishuv), as well as Christian and Muslim Arabs.

Margalit Shilo

On Middle-Class Zionist Women during the Second Aliyah in Palestine, 1904–1914

Zionist women’s yearning for emancipation was manifested in Palestine before World War I not only by socialist women workers, but also by middle-class bourgeois women who resided mainly in the cities. In the decade before the war, Jewish women in Ottoman Palestine started to be active in a number of fields. Some were innovators and leaders in education, philanthropy, arts and medicine. These women, most of whom had studied their professions at various universities in Europe, viewed their ascent on the professional ladder as an important Zionist act—the building of the land of Israel. After World War I most of them were active in the women’s struggle for equal rights in the newly formed Jewish elective assembly in Palestine. Thus, emancipation of women was an integral part of general national and Zionist yearnings.

Tuvia Friling

Istanbul 1942–1945:
The Kollek–Avriel Network and the Networks of Berman and Ofner

As the fate of European Jewry became known, Istanbul became a central jumping-off post for the aid and rescue missions operated by the Yishuv for the sake of European Jewry. Thus, during 1941 and, especially, 1942, both the Left and the Right in the Yishuv realized that it was essential to strengthen their overt and covert delegations in Istanbul, a crucial part of whose activities lay in organizing couriers and espionage networks.

The article reconstructs, analyzes and evaluates the mainstream networks organized by Teddy Kollek and Ehud Avriel and the right-wing networks organized by Isaac Berman and Dr. Francis Ofner. It considers the secret relationship between the Yishuv's paramilitary intelligence and operational branches and a number of British and American civilian and military intelligence services, the SIS and SOE, and the OSS and OWI, respectively. The article compares the Yishuv's various networks, the way they were founded and operated, their achievements and their failures, as well as their different fates.

Derek J. Penslar

Herzl and the Palestinian Arabs: Myth and Counter-Myth

According to conventional Zionist historiography, Herzl thought little about Arabs, and what he did have to say about them reflected benign and progressive, albeit paternalistic, sentiment. Critics of Zionism, on the other hand, claim that underlying the paucity of Herzl's comments on Arabs was a conspiracy of silence, for already in 1895 he was allegedly planning the expulsion of the Palestinians, although he only confided this dark scheme to his diary. This essay throws new light upon Herzl's attitudes towards Palestine's Arabs. It explores a variety of historiographical questions raised by the gulf that separates the camps of scholars who have written on this subject, and it critiques the way that historians have read Herzl's diary and privileged it over his other writings.

Ran HaCohen and Baruch Kimmerling

A Note on T. Herzl and the Idea of "Transfer"

A short passage from Theodor Herzl's diary, dated June 12, 1895, is often quoted in order to accuse the so-called Father of Political Zionism of supporting the idea of "transfer," i.e. the forced eviction, or ethnic cleansing, of Palestinian Arabs from Palestine. Although the use of the quote can be traced back to a 1979 article by Edward Said, it was the influential work of Israeli historian Benny Morris that served to make it widely publicized. This article argues that this passage has been consistently read out of context and that it does not, in fact, refer to Palestine. Instead, Herzl was addressing the very different context of a South American country where, at the time of writing, he had planned to create his "Jewish State." The article also describes the misreadings of Herzl's words in Morris's academic and journalistic work as well as in the work of other critics of Zionism, examining the various techniques used to blur the boundaries between description and evaluation, as well as between history and politics.

Benny Morris

Comment on the Article by Ran HaCohen and Baruch Kimmerling

Cohen and Kimmerling maintain that I have blackened Herzl's name by imputing to him support for the transfer of Arabs out of Palestine to make for the establishment of a Jewish state. They maintain that the passage from his diary, from June 1895, that I base this on dealt with South America, not Palestine. My contention is that (a) though Herzl was not explicit, in all likelihood—given that at this time he was engaged in writing the “Jews’ State,” in which Palestine was highlighted as the preferred option—he was thinking of Palestine; (b) Herzl elsewhere explicitly supported transfer of Arabs out of Palestine; (c) Herzl as a matter of principle supported the transfer of natives to make way for a Jewish state; and (d) Herzl was no different, in this respect, from the bulk of the Zionist leaders who followed him, including Ben-Gurion and Weizmann.