

TEL-AVIV UNIVERSITY  
THE INSTITUTE FOR ZIONIST RESEARCH  
FOUNDED IN MEMORY OF CHAIM WEIZMANN





This volume is dedicated with deep respect to the memory of  
PROFESSOR BENZION KATZ (BENZION BENSALOM)  
who founded and presided over the  
Chaim Weizmann Institute for Zionist Research of Tel-Aviv University



# ZIONISM

STUDIES IN THE HISTORY OF THE ZIONIST MOVEMENT  
AND OF THE JEWS IN PALESTINE

II

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# SUMMARIES

## AN EARLY MOVEMENT FOR AGRICULTURAL SETTLEMENT IN INNOWRACLAW (POZNAN PROVINCE) IN 1846

by **Jacob Toury**

Traces of a mass movement for agricultural colonization in pre-Zionist days are revealed in some recently uncovered documents concerning the well-known plan of Rabbi Solomon ben Akiva Eger for Jewish agricultural settlement in the province of Poznan. Although this project came to nothing, evidence on the popular response to it in the community of Inowraclaw (Hebrew: Lesla) suggests a readiness of the underprivileged Jews to follow any initiative that promised alleviation of their political and social misery.

Consequently, particulars of the social structure of the community of Inowraclaw are examined, as two thirds of its members, mostly tailors, other artisans, or entirely destitute "in-dwellers", speedily enrolled as prospective settlers. Finally, it is suggested that the community leaders were shocked by the mass response, and that their aversion to any national or, even merely, collective enterprise, and their subsequent machinations contributed to the ultimate failure of the movement.

## YIDDISH JOURNALISM IN THE LONDON EAST END, 1883—1887

The Turning Point Between Socialism and Hibbat Zion

by **Elhannan Orren**

Two young Hebraist and Socialist intellectuals ("Maskilim") from Eastern Europe, E.W. Rabinowitz ("Ur") and M. Winchevsky ("Ben Netz"), were drawn by the currents of migration to England. In the immigrant milieu of the East End, they started in July 1884 a socialist-inclined, yet overtly neutral, weekly "Der Poilisher Yidel", to become "Die Zukunft" in November 1884. This weekly reflected the first attempts at organizing Hovevei Zion in London under the impact of the Kattowitz conference.

The two partners first split due to a combination of political and Jewish reasons when the banker-philanthropist Samuel Montagu, a leader of Hovevei Zion, announced that he would stand as the Liberal candidate for Whitechapel in the forthcoming elections and Ur printed an election advertisement on his behalf. Ben Netz, however, took a militant Socialist line against the Liberal leader, and switched in August 1885 to the newly founded openly socialist monthly "Der Arbeiter Freund".

Both papers resigned themselves for a time to an uneasy co-existence since the monthly also depended on Ur for his printing press. But the rift widened when Ur, under pressure from Montagu, compelled the "Arbeiter Freund" to move out. It became final when Ur opened "Die Zukunft" in July 1886 to the Zionist publicist Ephraim Deinard. Ben Netz now attacked Hibbat Zion as a modern "golden calf".

Ur, having declared for Hibbat Zion, now became the prime mover in founding (April 1887) the first club of nationalist intellectuals in the East End, the "Kadimah Club", the nucleus of the popular Hovevei Zion movement, launched in London in 1890. Ur himself was destined to become one of the first supporters of Herzl in England and the man to whom the Zionist leader turned in July 1896 to "organize the East End" for him.

## POLITICAL VIEWS OF JEWISH STUDENTS IN KIEV 1909

by **Zvi Lipset**

This is a report on a survey of the national and political attitudes of Jewish university students in Kiev in 1909. For several reasons it probably reflects the views of all Russian Jewish University students of this period.

There were substantial differences in the national views of students according to the year of their studies and their social origin. First-year students tended to be more assimilationist than those graduating. Assimilationism was most widespread among the sons of large capitalists and of clerks, groups in Russian society most tied to the developing economy.

The general picture of the Jewish student of the time as being primarily revolutionary is not accurate. A substantial part of the Jewish student body was either non-party or supporters of non-revolutionary parties.

If views on Jewish nationalism are examined according to political views, a strange anomaly is observed. Among the Zionists 100% were supporters

of a Jewish nationalist view, but among the Bundists, a Jewish party with a Jewish national program, only 86 percent were supporters of a Jewish national view. Fourteen percent were either supporters of assimilation or indifferent to the subject. This wavering on the subject of Jewish nationalism by a Jewish nationalist party can probably be attributed to the confusing nature of the origins of the Bund's national program.

THE ATTITUDE OF THE POALE ZION PARTY IN ERETZ ISRAEL  
TOWARD THE DIASPORA DURING THE SECOND ALIYAH  
by **Yosef Gorni**

The ideology of the workers during the period of the Second Aliyah and its practical implications brought about the complete negation of the Jewish Diaspora as a spiritual experience and social reality. In their struggle for Jewish labour and Jewish self-defence; in their striving for communal agricultural settlements; in their zeal for the Hebrew language; in their romantic fighting spirit; in all those areas there was an ideological and emotional contrast — Eretz Israel as opposed to the Diaspora.

The attitude of Poale Zion toward the Diaspora was much more complex than that of the other workers' groups, especially Hapoel Hatzair, during the whole period of the Second Aliyah. Their attitude was characterized by its ambivalence: on the one hand, a radical negation of the Diaspora, and on the other hand, the recognition of their ideological and organizational ties to the existing parties in the Diaspora through the framework of the World Federation of Poale Zion.

The Poale Zion party wavered back and forth between these two opposing attitudes and was influenced both by the activity or passivity of the Poale Zion World Federation with regard to the practical work in Eretz Israel and, also, by the crystallization of the ideology of constructive socialism.

The result was tension between Poale Zion in Eretz Israel and their comrades in the Diaspora and, simultaneously, their growing closer to other workers' movements in Eretz Israel that previously had been their opponents. But, in spite of all this, Poale Zion did not sever their ideological and organizational ties with the Poale Zion in the Diaspora because they hoped that, in the future, they could convert them to their point of view.

THE CONTROVERSY IN AMERICAN JEWRY ABOUT AN AMERICAN JEWISH  
CONGRESS (1914—1916)

by **Yonathan Shapiro**

The dispute among American Jewry over the issue of establishing an American Jewish Congress is viewed as the manifestation of the struggle for the hegemony over the Jewish community between two groups of leaders. One group consisted of wealthy Jewish businessmen, the other of prominent members of the liberal professions led by Louis D. Brandeis. The first group was conservative and accomodating in its style of leadership, the second liberal and more aggressive. The fight between these two groups, and the compromise they reached at the end as to the form and content of the Jewish Congress after Brandeis became Justice of the Supreme Court, are described and analysed in this article.

THE CONTEST OVER THE CHARACTER OF THE YESHIVOTH AND  
THE RABBINATE IN JERUSALEM DURING THE FIRST YEAR  
OF THE BRITISH MANDATE

by **Menachem Friedmann**

World War I cut off the Old Yishuv from its traditional sources of revenue until eventually, well after the British occupation, it became completely dependent on the Zionist Aid Committee. This fact gave the Zionists an opportunity to change the economic and social character of the Old Yishuv. During the first three months after the occupation, the Zionists tried to create for the first time a unified leadership for the Jewish community in Jerusalem, which had previously been divided into small congregations. When Dr. Chaim Weizmann arrived as Head of the Zionist Commission (April 1918), he tried to widen the base and reform the structure of the communal leadership, and also to include within its framework the yeshivoth and the Rabbinate.

Weizmann visualized the yeshivoth in a form similar to that of a university. They would accept talented students in a course of studies for a fixed period of time. The Jerusalem yeshivoth were far from this vision: anyone who wanted could study there for as long as he desired. In addition Weizmann sought to bring the yeshivoth closer to the spirit of Zionism by requiring that their studies should be conducted in Hebrew.

Weizmann also wanted to redesign the structure of the Rabbinate. He visualized one rabbinic institution for the Jewish congregation of Jerusalem that would have authority over all the Jews in Eretz Israel.

Weizmann's attempts met with opposition from the Old Yishuv. They opposed on principle any change because they feared a Zionist regime, secular in outlook, controlling religious institutions.

In the end Weizmann failed, and R. Kook was nominated to serve as the chief rabbi of the Ashkenzi congregation in Jerusalem.

#### THE ECONOMIC CRISIS DURING THE FOURTH ALIYAH (1926–1927)

by **Dan Giladi**

The economic depression during the Fourth Aliyah was, in many ways, the most serious of all the crises that befell the Jewish settlement in Eretz Israel during the Mandate period, and it threatened the future of the entire Zionist effort. The crisis became apparent at the beginning of 1926 after a short period of unprecedented prosperity caused by the massive immigration and unprecedented building activity that occurred from mid-1924 to the end of 1925. The principal signs of the crisis were: a slowing down of immigration and eventually its complete cessation; unemployment that at its peak in 1927 left one-third of the Jewish manpower in the cities jobless; recession in the building trades; and bankruptcy in many factories.

The main cause of this situation was external: the deterioration of the status of Eastern European Jews caused a decrease in the funds they brought to Eretz Israel. This, first and foremost, influenced the building industry which was dependent on these funds. The collapse of the building industry badly affected other industries. However, in addition to this external cause, the crisis showed the weakness and inability of the Jewish economy to absorb such a large number of immigrants in such a short period of time, especially when these immigrants lacked the funds and the know-how needed for their absorption.

The crisis was most serious in Tel-Aviv and affected, to a lesser extent, Haifa and Jerusalem. The rural population was not affected; in fact, in the coastal settlements at this time there began a period of rapid development of the citrus industry by the planting of new groves.

During these depression years, the Histadruth proved its political maturity and organizational ability by protecting its position and even strengthening

it, while upholding the morale of the workers and their belief in the future of Eretz Israel. The Histadruth became the main Jewish communal force demanding continued settlement and development activities, despite the difficulties and setbacks. But even Solel Boneh, the Histadruth contracting firm for public works and construction, collapsed in 1927, adversely affecting the impetus of the workers' movement. Yet, despite this failure, the momentum and dynamicism that characterized the "Chevrat Haovdim" ("Workers' Corporation") was not interrupted, and its activities grew and branched out in new directions.

Economic analysis of statistical data from that period shows that from a purely economic point of view the recession in the Jewish economy was not as the people in those days thought. It seems that the feeling of a crisis was, for the most part, a result of weakness and lack of support of the World Zionist movement.

The crisis, its causes, and its characteristics are best explained, in the author's view, in an analysis by Chaim Arlosoroff which was published when the crisis was midway along its course.

**"THE LEFT" IN THE GDUD HAAVODA (WORK BRIGADE)  
AND THE P.K.P.\* UNTIL 1928  
by Anita Shapira**

In 1928 a group of the "Left" in the Gdud Haavoda, named in memory of Joseph Trumpeldor, under the leadership of Menachem Elkind, left Eretz Israel and went to Soviet Russia. The members of this group were considered to be among the best of the pioneers in the Third Aliyah and the fact that they left Eretz Israel amazed the Zionist labour movement in general, and their Gdud Haavoda colleagues in particular. The question of what caused these pioneers to take this drastic action was widely debated.

This essay tries to follow the connections between the Elkind group and the P.K.P. and to discover how much responsibility can be attributed to the P.K.P. for its defection. The conclusion of the author is that the influence of the P.K.P. in the process of the group's disillusionment was of secondary importance. Their disillusionment was more the result of internal developments within their own ideology. The Gdud Haavoda wanted to establish a "general commune" in Eretz Israel. By this they meant a communal way

\* Palestiner Kommunistische Partei.

of life and not the political regime advocated by Communist parties. The members of this group did not believe in the orthodox Communist creed (they especially opposed its attitude to the Jewish Problem in general, and Zionism in particular), and most of them did not become members of the Communist Party. The idea of a "general commune" was refuted by the reality of the late twenties in Eretz Israel (the Fourth Aliyah and its crisis, and the cessation of immigration and settlement). The group believed in achieving the "general commune" within a short time and, since this could not be achieved due to the political and economic situation in Eretz Israel, they lost their faith in achieving socialism in Eretz Israel. Their own problem was that they wanted to live in a commune, but they considered the communes in Palestine as hopeless and utopian. This was the main reason why they decided to go to Russia and establish there a commune which should blend with the economic and social system and therefore have a fair chance of success.

In this whole process the Communist Party played a minor role. It is true that it used its propaganda in order to influence the group members toward disillusionment with Eretz Israel, but this was not decisive. Moreover, the P.K.P. opposed the migration of the group to Russia, and was forced to yield only by direct orders from Moscow.

The tragedy of the "Left" in the Work Brigade was brought about by the internal process of their disillusionment with the establishment of socialism in Eretz Israel, something which caused their defection from Zionism as well.

#### THE POLITICAL ACTIVITY OF CHAIM WEIZMANN IN ITALY DURING THE YEARS 1923—1934

by **Daniel Carpi**

The political activity of Chaim Weizmann in Italy during the years 1923—1934 was much more important than previously thought. His activities centered mainly on his four meetings with Mussolini and several other diplomatic contacts, where he discussed aid to Jews in Germany and also central problems dealt with by the Zionist movement.

In order to clarify this topic, the author was aided by documents located in the archives of the British Foreign Office, the Italian Government Archives, the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem and the Weizmann Archives in Rehovot, in addition to diaries, journal and memoirs.

The first meeting was held on the 3rd of January 1923 and its purpose was to clarify if the new government intended to carry out the hostile declarations against Zionism made by the Fascist leaders previous to their coming to power. It became evident that even though their attitude remained unenthusiastic, to say the least, Mussolini was interested in preventing the burning of bridges between himself and the Zionist movement.

The second meeting took place on the 17th of September 1926, during the period when the Italian government was interested in forming a closer relationship with the Zionist movement in order to use it as one of the means for increasing its influence in the Eastern Mediterranean. A short time afterwards a pro-Zionist committee was formed — Comitato Italia-Palestina — though it did not continue to exist for long.

The third meeting was held on the 26th of April 1933, after the Nazi rise to power. Weizmann, who during that period held no formal position in the Zionist movement, was interested in gaining the support of the Italian Government for Jewish emigration from Germany. Also, as became evident later, Weizmann then touched up on the idea of the ending of the British Mandate in Eretz Israel and the partition of the country between the Jews and the Arabs. Contrary to his normal practice, Weizmann did not report the contents of this discussion to the British; however they were informed by Italian representatives in the League of Nations in Geneva. The British Foreign Office took a strong stand against the partition plan.

From then until the fourth meeting (February 17, 1934) the political contacts between the British and the Italians and between the Italians and Weizmann concerning the partition plan increased. At the meeting itself Mussolini agreed to aid in the emigration of Jews from Germany, by such specific measures as organizing transportation from Trieste, transfer of funds, etc. In exchange for this Weizmann was requested to use his influence in Britain towards Italy's rapprochement with the two democratic powers, thus facilitating a common front to halt the threat of the Nazi expansion. Mussolini also maintained that the British Mandate ought to be ended and that a Jewish state should be established in its place. He even hoped to obtain Arab agreement to this. According to the report that Weizmann gave to the British Ambassador in Rome, partition was also discussed.



The war in Ethiopia and its results strengthened the relationship between Italy and Germany and the riots that broke out in Eretz Israel put an end to Weizmann's Italian contacts.

#### THE BEGINNING OF NATIONAL JEWISH COMMUNISM IN PALESTINE

by **Shmuel Dothan**

From its inception in the early 1920's, the Palestine Communist Party revealed a bitter enmity toward the Zionist organization and, especially, toward immigration and settlement. During the Arab rebellion of 1936, the Central Committee identified itself with the objectives of the Arab movement and demanded that its Jewish members participate in terrorist activities against the Jewish population. This attempt failed, however, and the Central Committee decided to form a separate Jewish section that would adapt the Party's activities in Jewish areas according to the existing conditions. The fact that there existed a separate Jewish framework caused, over a period of time, an interesting development: the group of Jewish communists drifted away from identification with the Arab nationalist movement and its aspirations which were tending to become pro-Fascist. Instead, this Jewish group grew closer to the aspirations of the Yishuv and, finally, in 1940 its members felt obliged to leave the Party. Their group existed independently for two years.

#### A CORRESPONDENCE OF BOROKHOV AND USSISHKIN (1904—1906)

by **Matityahu Minc**

The letters published here illuminate the interesting period of the beginning of Borokhov's public activities. The political historiography of Poale Zion, guided by considerations of ideological convenience and opportunism, made efforts to belittle Borokhov's links in 1904—1905 with the Zionei Zion centre and especially with Ussishkin. Thus, the impact of Borokhov's contribution to the anti-Uganda controversy has been ignored.

The letters, which are preserved in Ussishkin's files in the Central Zionist Archives, span the period from September 1904—May 1906. Their contents, in addition to strengthening the above links, illuminate other interesting aspects of Borokhov's ideological evolution. They show us that his transition to Poale Zion was not a sudden one, but that he rather passed through several intermediate phases, which were not necessarily unknown to Ussishkin and the Russian Zionist centre.