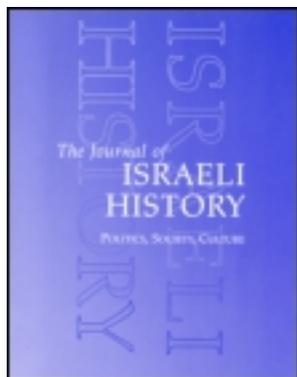


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Publisher: Routledge

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Journal of Israeli History: Politics, Society, Culture

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/fjih20>

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Available online: 16 Mar 2012

To cite this article: Meir Chazan (2012): The struggle of kibbutz women to participate in guard duties during the Arab Revolt, 1936-1939, *Journal of Israeli History: Politics, Society, Culture*, 31:1, 83-108

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13531042.2012.660380>

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The struggle of kibbutz women to participate in guard duties during the Arab Revolt, 1936–1939

Meir Chazan*

While problems of women's military service in Israel today are attracting increasing scholarly attention, there is little systematic discussion of the events and processes that laid the foundation for the present situation. This article discusses this topic as it emerged in the kibbutz movement during the Arab Revolt of 1936–39 in Palestine. The attempts of women to participate in guarding activities during the British Mandate reveal changes in their self-image during the first half of the twentieth century and the extent to which their aspirations were accepted and realized in the public sphere – security being one of its components. Although this article focuses on security, the issues raised are tightly connected to the social life of women on the kibbutz, the areas of their work, and their involvement in public activities. The kibbutz bulletins, the annual celebrations of International Working Women's Day, women's conventions, ideological seminars, and meetings of the Women Workers' Council reveal the transformations in kibbutz women's role in security matters during the Arab Revolt.

Keywords: Palestine; gender; Arab Revolt; kibbutz; Haganah; women's military service

Introduction

“Women are carrying guns!” – in these words, expressing a mixture of amazement and shock, the children of Kibbutz Ein Harod in the Jezreel Valley described the sight revealed to them in the evening of 4 July 1936. Earlier that evening, the daily bulletin of the kibbutz reported, many men and women members had visited “the first two female guards, Miriam Kelner and Shulamit Zhernovskaya.” The restrained style of the report could not hide the festive tone of achievement and success with which this event was perpetuated in the annals of Ein Harod, the Jezreel Valley, the kibbutz movement, the pre-state defense organizations, and the struggle of women for equality and for the recognition of their status and their rights as part of the revolutionary Zionist process in Palestine.

A few hours earlier, Eliyahu Golomb, who headed the Haganah (the main defense organization of the Jews in Palestine until 1948), had delivered a lecture in Ein Harod on “The Current Situation in Palestine,” and, given the circumstances, it seems likely that he supported the participation of women in guard duty.¹ This was the time of the first wave of the Arab Revolt of 1936–39 (April–October 1936). The inclusion of women among the guards on the 160th anniversary of the American Declaration of Independence – which had proclaimed that “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all people are created equal” – was a breakthrough, albeit largely symbolic, in the history of Jewish women's struggle in the pre-state period to take an active part in defense and guarding activities. They considered it a central component in a broader ideology that viewed women as having equal rights with respect to the duties and burdens, as well as the rewards, involved in the building of the Jewish national home in Palestine.

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The public debate on women's military service that flares up in Israel from time to time reflects, among others, the rise of the field of gender research and raises a variety of issues in this regard, from the limitations on the positions open to women in the army, the problems of their exemption from military service, to their vulnerability during their service.² Just over the past year (2011), there were two heated public debates on this issue: the first related to the first promotion of a woman – Orna Barbivai – to the rank of a major general in the IDF, and her appointment as the head of the Personnel Directorate of the General Staff, on 23 June 2011, and the second related to the refusal of religious soldiers to listen to women singing at military ceremonies and events.³ Women's service in the IDF, as Hannah Naveh has noted, is one of the main arenas in which "the battle over equality, citizenship, human rights and other civil rights, is waged."⁴ The phenomenon of women's military service derives from certain fundamental processes that took place in the twentieth century: the total war, which eroded the conceptual and practical distinction between "front" and "rear"; the growing need for military personnel as a result of the large-scale wars; and the intensifying struggle for equal rights and obligations for women in all facets of public life.⁵

It is often claimed that the army intensifies the gender differences that perpetuate the status of women as "man's helpmeet." Studies written by Dafna Yizraeli, Nitza Berkovich, and Orna Sasson-Levi, for example, reflect the tendency to focus on these issues as manifested in Israeli society from the 1980s onwards.⁶ While women's military experience today is attracting increasing scholarly attention, there is little systematic, historical discussion of the events and processes that laid the foundation for the present situation.⁷ Therefore, in this article I have chosen to examine the earlier, pre-state period, and to discuss these issues as they emerged in the kibbutz movement of that time. This choice is based not only on the importance of the kibbutz as a central focus of identification for that generation, but also on the availability and accessibility of primary sources, which enable us to examine the struggle for the integration of women in guard duties. There are far fewer sources on the participation of women in guarding and defense in other forms of settlement, such as the moshavim, *moshavot* (rural towns), and cities. Although women did take part in routine activities and military training outside the kibbutzim, their way of life and the clandestine nature of their activities meant that they did not leave behind systematic, comprehensive documentation that would enable us to establish a detailed picture of their views on the participation of women in guard duties.⁸ The focus of the discussion here is not the military activity itself but rather on the struggle to turn it into a major component of the life of women in the Yishuv (the Jewish community in pre-1948 Palestine) in the second half of the 1930s.

An analysis of the attempts of women to be integrated into guarding activities during the British Mandate can shed light on changes in their self-image during the first half of the twentieth century and the extent to which their aspirations were accepted and realized in the public sphere – security being one of its components. The discussion does not proceed from the assumption that a kind of "glass ceiling," existed, based on traditional "laws of nature," that blocked women's progress in kibbutz society. I argue that this approach hampers an understanding of the precise circumstances of that period by subjecting the discussion to a gender-oriented framework that obfuscates the historical perspective and distorts the meaning of the actual issues confronted by members of that generation.⁹ Although this article focuses on the realm of security, the issues raised are tightly connected to the social life of women on the kibbutz, the areas of their work, their discourse with their children, and their involvement in public activities. I will show that although women's spheres of activity were perceived by their male counterparts on the kibbutz (as well as in the

Yishuv in general) as marginal, the disagreements regarding the place of women on the kibbutz set in motion processes of gradual, if faltering, change that had a deep impact on women's status in the Yishuv.¹⁰

The kibbutz movement numbered, on the eve of the Arab Revolt, 10,635 members. Of these, 5,386 belonged to Hakibbutz Hame'uhad (the United Kibbutz Movement aligned with the dominant Labor Party, Mapai), around 47% of whom were women, 2,835 belonged to Hakibbutz Ha'artzi (the National Kibbutz Movement aligned with the socialist Hashomer Hatza'ir), and 1,407 belonged to Hever Hakvutzot (the smaller, moderate kibbutz movement within Mapai). By the outbreak of World War II the kibbutz movement had 17,839 members (an increase of about 60% in less than four years). Hakibbutz Hame'uhad now had 8,687 members (about 46% of them women), Hakibbutz Ha'artzi numbered 4,685 members, and Hever Hakvutzot 2,862 members. The three kibbutz movements incorporated, at that time, 117 settlements, 35 belonging to Hakibbutz Hame'uhad, 36 to Hakibbutz Ha'artzi, and 29 to Hever Hakvutzot.¹¹ In the second half of the 1930s, the kibbutz bulletin of each settlement became an important means of expression of the kibbutz experience, since the rapid demographic growth caused a loss of the sense of intimacy among the members, necessitating the use of media that could facilitate rapid, large-scale dissemination of information, while fostering the common bonds of social and ideological identity in a period of dramatic events and turmoil. The news items, stories, and editorials published in these bulletins, together with the events that took place every year to mark International Working Women's Day, women's conventions, ideological seminars, and the meetings of the Jewish Women Workers' Council, reveal the transformations that occurred in the role of women in security matters in kibbutz life during the Arab Revolt.

Women, gender, and guard duty until the Arab Revolt

The struggle of women in the kibbutzim and moshavim to join the guard forces during the Arab Revolt was preceded by a few prominent milestones: during the Second *Aliyah* (wave of Jewish immigration to Palestine, 1903–14), some of the wives of members of Hashomer (the first Jewish defense organization in Palestine, which preceded the Haganah) demanded to take an active part in the guarding activities carried out by male members in the settlements of the Galilee and Judea. In 1918, toward the end of World War I, a few hundred women enthusiastically demanded to join the volunteers of the Jewish Legion, a unit in the British army that fought the Ottoman Empire. In both cases, their demands were rejected. The deaths of Dvora Drechler and Sarah Chizik, who fought alongside Joseph Trumpeldor and his comrades at Tel Hai, in March 1920, did not change the situation.¹² Although women such as Manya Shochat, Rachel Yanait Ben-Zvi, and Rosa Cohen were prominent activists in the Haganah from its outset, the labor movement at that time was generally reluctant to include women in security activities. They contented themselves with assisting in areas such as first aid, smuggling weapons hidden under their clothes, and using their workplaces on training farms for young women as camouflage for military training. It was considered more important to encourage “the new Hebrew woman” to develop her unique contribution to the realization of Zionism in other social, cultural, and economic spheres.¹³ The prevalent attitude toward women's work on the kibbutz and their contribution to realizing the dreams of the pioneering society is revealed in a popular saying of those days quoted by Fania Artzi of Kvutzat Kinneret, to the effect that “with a woman you can live – not build,” let alone fight.¹⁴ A conspicuous reaction to the prevalent attitude to women's involvement in security matters can be found in an article written by Yitzhak Tabenkin, the leader of Hakibbutz Hame'uhad and a member of Kibbutz Ein Harod,

after the August 1929 riots, in which he protested sending the women and children to take cover in a cowshed on a distant hill while the kibbutz was in danger of being attacked. Tabenkin described it as an insult to the women and a debasement of the feeling of partnership and comradeship. Perceiving defense as a longtime necessity for that generation, and realizing that the kibbutz would have to live in tension for many years to come, he demanded the integration of women in the Haganah and insisted that there was no justification for distinguishing between the sexes in this matter.¹⁵

Towards the end of 1930, Hashomer Hatzar (the parent movement of Hakibbutz Ha'artzi) published a special issue of its journal, *Ha-Shomer ha-Tza'ir*, devoted entirely to "The Question of the Woman and the Girl in our Movement." About a year later, the journal of Hakibbutz Hame'uhad, *Mibifnim*, also published a special issue on this subject.¹⁶ The pivotal article in *Hashomer ha-Tza'ir* was a translation of Anton Nemilov's introduction to his book *The Biological Tragedy of the Woman*. Nemilov, a professor at the University of Leningrad, claimed that the achievement of equality between the sexes was hampered by biological differences, and his thesis became one of the cornerstones of Hakibbutz Ha'artzi's ideology on the status of women. Hashomer Hatzar was exceptional in the openness of its discussions about sexuality and femininity in Yishuv society at that time (and in its youth movement abroad), which it regarded as part of its socialist outlook.¹⁷

On the other hand, a common saying among the children of Ein Harod in those days was: "if women don't speak at the assembly [the most important forum of kibbutz members], then why do they go there?" These words accurately reflected the fact that few kibbutz women took part in public activities at that time. In order to contend with this situation, the two guest editors of the abovementioned special issue of *Mibifnim*, Lilia Bassewitz and Yocheved Bat-Rachel, initiated a regulation, enacted first in Ein Harod and later accepted by Hakibbutz Hame'uhad as a whole, which stipulated that at least a third of the members of the executive institutions should be women. In fact, this regulation was implemented only very partially.¹⁸

In 1935, the Council of Women Workers, the representative body of Jewish women workers in Palestine, which operated in conjunction with the Histadrut (Labor Federation), decided to start observing International Working Women's Day (as in other socialist movements). The celebrations, which took place on 5–6 April, highlighted the fight against German fascism, and also against "Jewish fascism," i.e., Revisionism, which threatened to destroy the achievements of the labor movement.¹⁹ In addition to the singing of "The International" and the Zionist labor movement anthem "Tehezakna" (Be strong), which opened and closed the regional celebration held in Ein Harod on 6 April, two poems were recited: "Do Not Give Them Guns," by Natan Alterman, and "I Have Not Sung Your Praises, My Country," by Rachel Bluwstein.²⁰ The nature of the celebrations indicates that security concerns were regarded as an aspect of women's public activity in the labor movement. The questions of economic and social equality between men and women were given a central place, of course, but the call for a "war against war," which was common among communist and socialist circles in Europe in the first half of the 1930s, was also heard at the meeting. Moreover, Rachel Katznelson-Rubashov, a leading activist in the Women Workers' Council and the editor of its monthly publication, *Dvar ha-Po'elet*, saw fit to comment that during the preceding few years a change had been taking place in notions of men's and women's "equality in the obligations of war," a change that could not be ignored. She mentioned Japan and the Soviet Union, where women were being trained to participate in war – "with enthusiasm, self-sacrifice, concentration of will." And she added regretfully: "The special logic of history, which is so skillful at abusing us and our definitions, has given a new interpretation to the liberation of women."²¹ She did not know

how accurate this prophesy would prove to be. On the following International Working Women's Day, observed in the Jezreel Valley on 12 April 1936, an entry in the diary of "Hugim," the founding group of Kibbutz Beit Hashita, observed that "the vehicle going to the Working Women's Day celebration in Tel Yosef was not crowded. The rebellion against the Women Workers Council [based on opposition to gender-based organization] and indifference did their part."²² At the ceremony, Katznelson-Rubashov, who represented the Council, stressed "our obligation to find a way to approach and help the Arab woman – the ignorant, enslaved neighbor, living next to us."²³ Her words revealed not just socialist sensitivity, but also condescension and ignorance of the hardships and aspirations of "the neighbor," which were soon to be revealed in all their force.

The beginning of the women's struggle in 1936

The Arab Revolt erupted on 19 April, with the murder of 16 Jews in Jaffa within two days and a declaration of an Arab general strike throughout the country six days later. The revolt soon spread to the periphery, and the Jewish community felt gravely threatened.²⁴ Fields, grain barns, and woods were set on fire, trees were cut down, agricultural property was damaged, and people were ambushed and shot at. The spontaneous reaction of the rural settlements, the main victims of these hostile acts, was to allocate more and more members to guarding and security. In Ein Harod, for example, 45 members (about a quarter of all the members) were stationed every night at various guard posts around the kibbutz. Throughout the kibbutz movement, whenever there was shooting or fire, the women were usually ordered to gather in the darkened dining hall and the children's houses and take cover under the tables and beds until the all-clear signal was given. The feeling of helplessness combined with the passivity imposed on them made them angry and deeply frustrated. The fact that this experience recurred night after night, for weeks on end, gradually intensified their feelings of being weak and unworthy of sharing the burden of defense alongside the men. This situation was diametrically opposed to the ideal of equality as a fundamental element in the social life of the kibbutz. The situation of dependence in which these women found themselves trapped became the focus for all the frustration they had accumulated throughout their years of communal life with regard to gender equality. They felt as though they had been cut off from their revolutionary Zionist life and cast back to the fate of the timid Jews of the diaspora *shtetl*, against which they had rebelled and from which they had wanted to detach themselves. This frame of mind led to growing agitation among the women with regard to their role during this military conflict, whose end was nowhere in sight. More than anything, they were aggrieved by their male comrades' almost automatic disregard for them, reflecting their doubt in women's ability to play a meaningful role, share the common burden, and be of real use in coping with the security risks and challenges.²⁵

The standard of rebellion was first raised by the women of Kibbutz Mishmar Ha'emek (one of the leading kibbutzim in Hakibbutz Ha'artzi). For about two weeks, the kibbutz had suffered repeated attacks and acts of arson, with around 1,500 trees cut down and set on fire. The following item, entitled "The Right to Defend," was published in the kibbutz bulletin on 10 May:

Every night we are summoned and shocked by the flames bursting from the midst of the grove [near the kibbutz]. Every night, and sometimes a few times a night, the old Chevrolet crosses the hilly tracks, taking the guys, two and three times, to put out the fire. The firefighters are armed with wet sacks and hoes. A line of defenders stands guard over them. The firefighters' work requires just some strength and a little bit of courage. Women are not part of this rescue operation. They are driven away when they come to offer some strength and a little bit of courage of their own. This is a time of emergency. It is not the time for arguments by the

smoking flames. The women are left behind to enjoy the rights of Emperor Nero [watching the fire] – a hard and insulting right. It takes a large amount of discipline and effort to stay passive at such an time. Is it really impossible to let a few women participate in the work of putting out the fire? Is it impossible to arrange and organize that in advance? Precisely now, when we have been given a little respite, for us and for our grove, for us and for our fields, this should be organized. The organizing institutions have distinguished themselves in their action [putting out the fire] this time. With a little bit of understanding and will, they will also know how to put an end to this injustice.²⁶

This basic feeling, which gradually spread throughout the kibbutzim, was completely different from the situation that had been prevalent until then and had been accepted even by the activists of the Women Workers' Council. For example, an editorial in *Dvar ha-Po'elet*, published on 10 May, three weeks after the beginning of the violence, defined the role of the female members of the Histadrut in those days. The women were called upon to exhibit calmness and self-control in difficult moments, to help the wounded and the Jewish refugees who had fled their homes in Arab towns, such as Jaffa, and to devote themselves to the production of agricultural crops in the farming settlements and to the consumption of products made by Jews. As far as the Women Workers' Council was concerned, women's roles at that time had no connection to the domain of security.²⁷

The first barrier preventing women from participating in defense activities was the local guard committee in each settlement, which consisted exclusively of men who were considered by themselves and others as "professionals" with absolute and unquestioned authority in this sensitive and critical area. They responded to the women's demands to participate in guard duty with arguments such as: women are not capable of acquiring the skills needed in order to operate weapons; they are tense and nervous and therefore will not be able to adjust to the stress of a security alert; they lack experience; there is a shortage of women to perform the "female" jobs; moreover, the confidence of the man who is forced to guard with them will be undermined, and instead of guarding his post his attention will be diverted to the need to protect the woman at his side.²⁸

In order to overcome the steadfast opposition of the professionals who were in charge of managing the security sphere – among them Israel Ben-Eliyahu, the commander of Gush Harod, the regional section of the Haganah, and Haim Sturman, one of the veterans of Hashomer and the prominent security figure in the Jezreel Valley – the kibbutz women took advantage of two organizational tools: the prevalent custom on the kibbutzim to hold meetings to discuss problems troubling the members, and the publication of articles and information in the kibbutz bulletins, which were usually edited by women, since this was not considered productive work requiring physical effort. Under the leadership of Eva Tabenkin, the women of Ein Harod adroitly moved the discussion and resolution of their demand to participate in defense activities from the closed bodies of the professionals to the arena of the general assembly. The tradition, since the late 1920s, of occasionally holding meetings for women only helped in preparing this move. At one of these gatherings, which took place on 10 June, Shulamit Zhernovskaya declared that "the woman who came here not as a man's wife, but rather as a creator and builder of the economy and society, will not merely resign herself to the passive feeling of deep indignation. This experience, which now encompasses half of the public, has to be expressed and actively satisfied." She asserted firmly that "the absence of women from the guarding front" amounted to demeaning them and depriving them of the right to participate in the resolution of a crucial matter in kibbutz life.²⁹ Shifting the crux of the controversy over women's participation in guard duty from the security domain to that of socialist-collective principles neutralized the chauvinistic arguments expressed by the members of the guard committee behind closed doors. These

arguments vanished on the floor of the general assembly, where ideological tenets, including the utopian vision of a life of equality between the two sexes, had played a central role since the early days of the kibbutz.

On 14 June, Mordechai Hadash, a member of Kvutzat Kinneret and one of the main activists in security matters in the Jordan Valley, wrote to Aharon Tzizling, the secretary (managing director) of Ein Harod (and later one of the founders of the Palmah, the elite force of the Haganah) that “the rebellion of the female members in Ein Harod” was not just a welcome effort to renew the norms of collective life but also the beginning of a new era in the guarding and defense system. Not “the idea of women’s liberation,” he said, was his main concern, but rather the benefit of training more and more people to bear arms, which also had an educational dimension, since it meant adapting women to risking their body and soul in acts of defense. If a woman became used to behaving passively during an attack, lying helplessly on the floor, then, when the time came, “she wouldn’t accept her son’s going to battle. She would protect him with all her strength and with all the means of a loving mother, and pull him, instinctively, down onto the floor.”³⁰ In this case, too, children were the criterion for evaluating women’s status in kibbutz life, although this time, from the male point of view. Defining the events of those weeks in Ein Harod as “a rebellion” was in keeping with the language long used by activists in the Women Workers’ Movement in Palestine. For example, in 1933, Ada Fishman (Maimon), one of the leaders of the movement, who headed a training farm for young women at Ayanot (near Nes Ziona), defined the institution she had founded as “a station of rebellion,” which, rather than encouraging women to shirk obligations, trained them to shoulder the burden, assume responsibility for their life, and be involved in the society within which they lived.³¹

On 22 June 1936, the Women Workers’ Council sent a letter to various bodies affiliated with it throughout the country (committees of women workers, organizations of working mothers, female members of kibbutzim and moshavim), in which it reported that there was information from various settlements regarding “the small part of women members in guard duty.” The council promised to help women in the settlements in their efforts to join guarding activities and called on women in the cities and rural towns to join the semi-underground organizations affiliated with the Haganah (Hapo’el, Hasadran), and assist in public activity as required.³² Concurrently, the women received the backing of two of the top leaders of the kibbutz movement: Yitzhak Tabenkin of Hakibbutz Hame’uhad and Ya’akov Hazan (a member of Mishmar Ha’emek) of Hakibbutz Ha’artzi. At a meeting of the Executive Committee of Hakibbutz Ha’artzi on 12 May, a few weeks after the riots began, Hazan asserted that not integrating women in security activities on the kibbutzim was “a mistake.”³³ At the general assembly of Ein Harod in June 1936, Tabenkin mustered all his rhetorical power and social influence to tip the scales in favor of letting women participate in guard duty without delay. In order to make clear how determined he was about it, Tabenkin sponsored a resolution, which was passed by the extended executive of Hakibbutz Hame’uhad on 29 June, to convene for the first time ever a special assembly of women representatives from all the kibbutzim of the movement in order to discuss the work of women on the kibbutz.³⁴

Two days later, on 1 July, the women of Ein Harod gained their first victory in the struggle to take part in guarding activities when the general assembly of the kibbutz confirmed that two women would participate in guard duty on a regular basis, a third of the members of the guard council would be women, and women would be trained to bear arms.³⁵ On 4 July, the Kibbutz Mishmar Ha’emek bulletin reported that it had been decided, as of that day, to train women for guard duty. On this occasion, it did not fail to mention that no women had been allowed to participate in putting out the last two field fires.³⁶

The achievement of the women of Ein Harod aroused great interest in the contemporary kibbutz press, and with the help of the monthly *Dvar ha-Po'elet* and the backing of the Women Workers' Council, the news spread among women's circles throughout the country. More and more kibbutz bulletins started publishing articles by women demanding their right to participate in guard duty. Thus, a kind of "covert competition" developed between the women of Mishmar Ha'emek and those of Merhavia (Meir Ya'ari's kibbutz in the Jezreel Valley) over which kibbutz would be the first to implement the reform. The Mishmar Ha'emek bulletin boasted that its women members had joined the guard before those in Merhavia, but at the same time lamented that the latter were guarding not just the living quarters but also the vineyard outside the kibbutz.³⁷ While recognizing that the women's struggle had a chance to succeed, Emma Levin-Talmi, a member of Mishmar Ha'emek, reminded her readers that women had been denied the right to guard and put out field fires "quite spontaneously and as a matter of course." She noted that the question of guard duties was "a new shadow" that "had been added to the other shadows in the life of women on the kibbutz." Connecting the present struggle over guard duty to the wider context, she lamented:

Every day we realize the "utopia" – the kibbutz. But we postpone the utopia of a life of complete equality between male and female members to a distant future. . . . Our children have a great share in that future. They see everything, ask and wonder: why do the fathers, the men, go to put out the fire, and the mothers, the women, are cowards?! Is that so?! Today they just wonder, but, gradually, if they get used to it, they will adapt to it, and everything will become a matter of course, and the grandmotherly [diaspora] style will come back in everything.³⁸

Once again, children were evoked in the women's discourse, for it was under their gaze and for their sake that women were called upon to join the struggle for their right to participate in guard duty. Their centrality in the discourse stemmed from the fact that children were generally perceived as the "sacred" crowning achievement of kibbutz life, as living proof that this was the right ideological path, and as the justification for the daily sacrifices and the embodiment of all the hopes for a better and just future.

Not only men opposed the women's organizational activities. Many women also objected to organization on the basis of gender in order to promote gender-related goals, even though it was meant to change the relations between the sexes and the practices of kibbutz society in general. Disagreement with the proposed changes was expressed with a glance, with silence, or by evading participation in meetings, and, in most cases, without expressing their opinion in a documented forum.³⁹

In an assembly of Kibbutz Givat Brenner, held on 8 August 1936, one of the members, Geula Shertok (the younger sister of Moshe Shertok [Sharett], future foreign minister and prime minister of Israel), described "the exhausting, futile negotiation" she had conducted with the guard committee of her kibbutz regarding the training of a group of female members for participation in guard duty. She related how she had encountered reactions of disdain, belittlement, and mistrust. The derision and humiliation she experienced in these talks were "strange, distorted, and unesthetic," but "in the flash of gunfire, there is no choice for the weak but to say 'I am strong'." Not all men on the kibbutz were skilled warriors, she said sarcastically, and wondered: "are there no cases of failure in the realm of the other sex?" From this she concluded that "it is uncomradely, immodest, ridiculous, and pitiful when someone who is weak mocks and disdains someone who is weaker," and stated with barely contained anger:

I do not want and will not allow others to risk their lives because of me. I forever despise and abhor a life of forced parasitism, a life of charity, not molded by my own hands. I do not want and will not allow anyone, however much stronger and more beautiful than I, to usurp my

sacred possessions, to uproot and detach me from my native soil, to trample my love for my homeland, and to block my way to that plot of land on which people determine their fate for life or death.⁴⁰

The assembly eventually decided, by majority vote, to obligate the guard committee “to let the women participate in guard duty and defense posts.”⁴¹

In the neighboring Kibbutz Na’ana (Na’an) a fierce dispute also erupted among the women members over the right to perform guard duty, but unlike in other kibbutzim the opposition was openly expressed in writing. A report published in the kibbutz bulletin on 17 August noted sarcastically that “at long last Na’ana has taken a step forward in the war for women’s liberation and equal rights and has sent its first woman member to participate in guard duty.” The anonymous author recognized the need to train women members to defend themselves but drew a clear distinction between “defense” and “guard duty.” Guarding meant ongoing military activity, which demanded physical strength that women did not possess. She argued that women should not waste “all their sharp weapons and heavy artillery of equal rights and social justice and a war of liberation” on the demand for equal participation in military activity merely because of romantic enthusiasm for rhetoric such as “we daughters of a reborn nation know how to conquer our place in all fields of work and life,” which in fact stemmed from an understandable and artificial sense of inferiority.⁴²

A day before this article was published, Haya Freund of Kibbutz Ramat Hakovesh, not far from Kfar Sava, had been killed while on guard duty. On numerous kibbutzim, the women adopted methods of struggle that had succeeded in Ein Harod, but on Ramat Hakovesh they had carried it to an extreme and boycotted the kibbutz assembly on 9 August in protest against the refusal to allow them to participate in guard duty. Their demand had been accepted. Ramat Hakovesh was the kibbutz with the most casualties during the Arab Revolt, losing 16 of its inhabitants. Freund, who was shot to death during an Arab attack on the kibbutz on the second night of her guard duty while she was standing at an observation post on top of the water tower, was the first casualty of Ramat Hakovesh in that period. Speaking at her graveside, Tabenkin declared: “This is not the last victim. Haya’le knew it too. This was what she fought for, already in the second month of the riots. We will be heroes against our will.”⁴³ In her last letter to her brother in Poland, Freund wrote:

To write to you about our life here, on Ramat Hakovesh? This is a very difficult matter. In the city [i.e., Tel Aviv], for example, you will not notice anything. Some go to the theater and others to a concert. Different things fill the hearts of many, many people. But here it is different. After a day of work in the burning heat, before we get a chance to see each other or read a newspaper (let alone a book), it’s already dark. You cannot turn on a lamp, and if we cover the windows it is stifling. So we sit in the dark, and wait for the shots. That’s the way it is, my dear, and who knows what the future will bring?⁴⁴

Hakibbutz Hame’uhad did not regard Freund as an exemplary model of a bold heroine, nor was she an outstanding fighter for women’s liberation. A friend wrote that Freund was not “publicly prominent,” rather, “she seemed average, one of the people.” But she refused to stay inside and lie on the floor during shooting, because it seemed to her humiliating and insulting.⁴⁵ At the end of the first wave of the revolt, in October, Rachel Katznelson determined that Freund’s figure had become “a symbol for the entire movement of women workers,” like Drechler and Chizik, who had been killed at Tel Hai. She “was just one,” and they “were only two, but we live by this symbol.”⁴⁶ More than commending the fact that the movement had found a symbol that would give it worthiness and pride, Katznelson seemed to be implying that she was pleased that only a few women had been killed while on guard duty, expressing her long-standing reservations about the integration of women in security activities.

Esther Kramer from Givat Brenner noted that there were indeed men members who condemned the fear demonstrated by many women, but, she maintained, there were many other women who could carry out heroic deeds just as well as the young Russian women during the revolution and the civil war. "Are we less capable of preparing for acts of heroism than an Arab woman who has not yet removed the veil from her face?"⁴⁷ During the Arab Revolt, the Hebrew press occasionally published news about the political activity of Arab women. In June 1936 an article in *Dvar ha-Po'elet* reported demonstrations and processions of women – adults, girl scouts, and schoolgirls – which took place in the cities of Jenin, Tulkarem, Jaffa, Gaza, Nablus, and Jerusalem. In their ardent speeches at those rallies, "ridiculous statements" were sometimes made, "such as that of the Women's Committee of Jerusalem who threatened the High Commissioner with the great danger the government faced from the Arab women joining the battlefield, or the declaration made by one woman at a women's meeting that everyone should be told that Arab women rocked the cradle with one hand, and the whole world with the other."⁴⁸

On the day following Freund's death, two Jewish nurses, Nehama Tzedek and Marta Fink, were murdered on their way to work at the government hospital in Arab Jaffa. This murder shocked the Yishuv more than any other during the first wave of the Arab Revolt, in which 80 Jews were murdered. On the same day, 17 August, Jessie Sampter completed an article, bearing the self-explanatory title "Watchwomen," which later appeared in the U.S. Jewish Labor Movement's monthly *Jewish Frontier*. Sampter, an American-Jewish poetess, who had arrived in Palestine in 1919, had moved to Givat Brenner in 1934 and established a vegetarian guest house, which soon became one of the most coveted destinations for members of the labor movement across the country. "The wise woman from Givat Brenner," as she was eulogized when she died in November 1938 – and who, on her deathbed, authored her most original and poignant article, in favor of the unification of the kibbutz movements, a vision that was realized only 61 years later⁴⁹ – was also a fervent pacifist and an advocate of a dialogue with the Arabs. Nevertheless, following the riots of 1929, and again in light of the events of August 1936, she acknowledged the necessity of defense. In the *Jewish Frontier* article, Sampter reviewed, extensively and with deep empathy, the history of the struggle of women to play an active role in the realization of Zionism. The article opened with a description of the efforts of Manya Shochat and her female comrades, whom Sampter described as "armed amazons," endowed with a "quality as of bronze," to take an active part in the defense activities of Hashomer (1909–20), and it ended with a series of rhetorical questions of deep concern to women at that time:

Shall half of the community protect the other half? Shall half lie on the floor while the other half is facing the shots? What will our children say? What will our daughters say when they grow up and are differentiated from the little boys with whom until now they shared everything? Will a mother send her fifteen year old boy to go on guard while she hides in the concentration room?

Addressing her readers among U.S. Jewry, especially women, the well-liked poetess promised and pledged:

The pioneer Jewish woman must stand by her man at this hour in defense, and at a later hour attain in the work of cooperation and peaceful up building. The little girls who came from Germany last year are already bronzed by the sun; they have the same color and speak the same Hebrew as the little girls born in Jerusalem or Warsaw. There stands one on the hillock, against the rising sun, a white kerchief on her head, wearing a deep blue sleeveless blouse, short black bloomers, high over sandaled feet. She is brown and straight as a young tree, a lonely tree standing guard on a hillock. The wind blows her brown curls and her hand shades her eyes against the rising sun.⁵⁰

It was in these historical circumstances that Hakibbutz Hame'uhad held a Conference on the Question of Women's Work, which took place on Kibbutz Givat Hashlosha on 13 July, attended by 36 women from the 21 kibbutzim of the movement. The issue of women's work had occupied the kibbutz for quite a while and was aggravated both by the demographic growth experienced by the kibbutz movements and by the first signs of the economic recession in Palestine. The female sector, which had always been seen as a vulnerable element in the kibbutz labor market, no less than in the towns, suffered from widespread, overt and covert, unemployment. During the conference, Yocheved Bat-Rachel, a member of Ein Harod, presented the participation of women in guard duty as a right based on the principle of mutual partnership that should exist between men and women in all areas of life. This right had been denied them, and the aim of the public struggle taking place then was to protest that denial. Sarah Blumenkrantz from Tel Yosef argued, on the contrary, that guarding was not a right but an obligation, and that recognition of this had to be instilled in every woman on the kibbutz. She was joined by Yehudit Simhonit, also from Tel Yosef, who related how, on her kibbutz, women were afraid to enter a room unless a man entered before them, and she added:

We have stopped restraining all our instincts. We once knew how to go together with men, and now we have reached such a terrible situation. The obligation of defense should be imposed on every woman, and not just on a few. I have a six-year-old child. His father is a guard. He told me: "I saw someone with a gun that you wouldn't have been able to carry, because I couldn't carry it either."

However, in spite of her revolutionary tone concerning guard duty, on the issue of work, Simhonit declared that "fortunately, it has not been advocated here that men should be sent to the kitchen, and women – to pick grapes. The women who work responsibly in the house feel good about it. A person should work anywhere, and not feel inferior about doing housework."⁵¹ At the end of the conference, for the first time in Hakibbutz Hame'uhad, a department was established within the executive of the movement to handle matters related to women. Its members were Bassewitz, Blumenkrantz, and Bracha Rechtman. The resolutions of the conference determined that "the executive of the movement should demand of its units (Hakibbutz Hame'uhad settlements and groups affiliated with it in the cities) to fully realize the equal rights and obligations of female and male members in the sphere of defense."⁵²

Sarah Amster, of Kibbutz Merhavia, seeking to demonstrate that fear was not an innate feminine quality, pointed out that the number of women who had attacked members of the ruling class in tsarist Russia was no smaller than that of men. Compared to the women who had come to Palestine from Russia or Poland and found it natural to become fighters in their new country as well, women like her, who had come from other countries, did not appreciate enough "the fact that Palestine, which is surrounded by deserts, with their uncivilized inhabitants, will impose on us the task of guarding well and defending our lives for a long time." She admitted that the willingness to train women for guard duty did not ensure that, at the moment of truth, it would be possible to predict how they would behave, "but even the men have not yet guaranteed that they will always act like heroes. The women should be given 'credit,' and, at the right time, we will know how to pay it back in full."⁵³

Emma Levin-Talmi, who worked in the social department of Hakibbutz Ha'artzi, initiated a number of regional conferences for the women members of the movement. The first one took place toward the end of August 1936, attended by about fifty women from the kibbutzim of the Jezreel and Zevulun valleys. Thirty Jews had been murdered during that month, which was the most violent in the first wave of the Arab Revolt. It was a "unique conference," as Ya'akov Hazan proclaimed enthusiastically in his opening

remarks, since it was the first women-only conference in the history of Hashomer Hatza'ir. As in the conference of women members of Hakibbutz Hame'uhad in Givat Hashlosa, the discussions here also dealt mainly with the relation between service jobs and agricultural work, the difficulties involved in integrating women in the latter, and the paucity of their expression and influence in public life. Nevertheless, it was obvious, and mentioned time and again by the speakers, that the guarding issue had given the impetus for holding the conference. One of the topics discussed was, once again, as in 1930, Nemilov's thesis about "the biological tragedy of women." Hazan was sarcastic about the central place accorded to Nemilov's arguments, and said that even though more male than female members of Hashomer Hatza'ir read science books, "I am sure this phenomenon has no biological reasons." At the same time, he admitted that equality between the sexes was hampered by the fact that "we are, ourselves, all of us, a generation of transition, almost the wilderness generation, whose entire education was grounded in bourgeois and petit-bourgeois society, with its 'male culture.' We carry with us, unwittingly, the burden of this legacy." The resolutions of the conference determined that the kibbutz movement, which had aspired to create exemplary models of the future socialist society, in which there would be complete equality between the members, had failed to carry out its task adequately. The participants in the conference demanded the establishment of a women's committee, which would promote and develop women's activities in the kibbutzim of the Zevulun and Jezreel regions, and insisted on their right to participate in guard duty in peaceful times as well. Another demand was to set fixed quotas for women in the general institutions of Hakibbutz Ha'artzi, which was a sharp reversal of the longstanding contempt of Hashomer Hatza'ir toward the resolution of Hakibbutz Hame'uhad on this matter in the early 1930s.⁵⁴

The status of women in conferences held during the lull in the Revolt

The women's conferences in the kibbutzim, together with the numerous articles published in kibbutz organs and the labor movement press before and after these conferences, led to increasing manifestations of women's activism in 1936–39, as demonstrated by the many political assemblies that took place during the lull in the Arab Revolt, between October 1936 and September 1937 (at the time of the British Royal Commission of Inquiry headed by Lord William Peel) and the seminars that were held throughout the labor movement in 1937. However, Hever Hakvutzot was notably absent from this activity, as women's organized activity was almost nonexistent in this movement, even though their status in it was no less problematic than in the other two kibbutz movements. This can be learned, for example, from the comment made by Haya Tanpilov (the wife of Tanhum Tanpilov, one of the founders of Degania), which was published in the Degania Alef bulletin in March 1937: "Degania has acted in all areas of economics and life, but with regard to the issue of women members, it has not lifted a finger. There is great neglect of almost half of our society."⁵⁵ A month earlier, Degania, "the Mother of the *Kvutzot*," had had to resort to asking Eva Tabenkin to open an assembly of women members on the role of women in guarding and security. Tabenkin noted that the deep resentment against the dismal situation of women in this area had blurred all the disagreements between women with different political affiliations in their respective kibbutz movements and created among them "complete unity in their willingness to fight" to change their situation. Under the provocative title "Is the Woman Member Doomed to Impotence?" Fania Artzi described the situation in Degania in regard to guarding. Those in charge of security on the kibbutz were willing to let the women participate in guard duty, but only two women actually

did because they were reluctant to relieve one another at work. Artzi assumed that the relative indifference the women of Degania exhibited toward this issue was partly due to the fact that the kibbutz had been left “in the rear” during the violence, from which the Jordan Valley region had suffered far less than the Jezreel and Hefer valleys. She considered that the local commanders’ ready acceptance of the women’s demand to participate in guard duty was, in this case, detrimental, since the women had no reason to organize and fight for their rights and obligations as part of the overall struggle to improve their status on the kibbutz.⁵⁶ In Ein Harod a struggle had been necessary and had therefore spread to other kibbutzim and had a far-reaching effect on Hakibbutz Hame’uhad.

The event that launched the series of sociopolitical discussions on the status of women in the labor movement was the first open, public conference on security issues in the history of Hakibbutz Hame’uhad, and, in fact, in the history of the Yishuv, which took place at the eleventh convention of the movement, held on Kibbutz Yagur on 2–7 October 1936 (a few days before the end of the first wave of the Arab Revolt).⁵⁷ Eva Tabenkin, the separated wife of Yitzhak Tabenkin, the leader of Hakibbutz Hame’uhad, who was known throughout the movement as the standard bearer of “the women’s rebellion” in Ein Harod (their fight to participate in guard duty), declared that, for women on the kibbutz, “the lights and their splendor are not coming closer but rather receding further and further into the distance, and sometimes seem to have been extinguished altogether.” With regard to the timing of the rebellion, during such a turbulent period of extreme security threats, she asserted that the reason for starting the women’s public struggle had not been either jealousy of men or a feeling of inferiority toward them but the fact that “the public phenomenon revealed here was so outrageous that it was impossible to ignore it.” The “women’s rebellion,” she argued, had followed the traditional path of the kibbutz since the days of the Second *Aliyah*: “first we acted and then we interpreted and summarized.” In other words, in the same way in which the Histadrut, the small settlements, and the kibbutzim had started – first by “building,” and only then by aspiring to “socialism” and “Zionism” – so now, too, the achievement of participating, with equal rights, in guard duty had come first, and only later was it defined as a stage in the war for women’s liberation, feminism, etc.⁵⁸ Blumenkrantz, a member of the movement’s committee for women’s affairs, warned in her speech at the convention that discrimination against women in guard duty had not yet ended. “The ‘*numerus clausus*’ is still in force. The number of women who are sent for guard duty is based on a percentage of the total number of guards, and when that number declines [following the apparent lull in the revolt], the number of women guards drops to zero.” It was impossible, she admitted, “to constantly live a life of war,” and women gradually fall silent and accept the fact that their struggle for achieving “their rights and obligations in defense and guard duty” had been concluded. The convention of Hakibbutz Hame’uhad fully ratified the resolutions of the women’s conference in Givat Hashlosha and instructed the movement’s executive to demand that its kibbutzim “truly realize the equal rights and obligations of male and female members in defense.”⁵⁹

The Histadrut granted its approval for the kibbutz women’s struggle to participate in guard duty at the conference of the Women Workers’ Council, which took place on 22–24 December. Eva Tabenkin demanded that a woman be included in the Haganah headquarters in order to reinforce the achievements of the women’s struggle and create an institutional anchor that would make it harder to undermine those achievements over time. And indeed, when the extended executive of the Haganah was established, in April 1937, Bat-Sheva Haikin, of Kibbutz Yagur, was elected by the Executive Committee of the Histadrut as one of its eight representatives in this body, probably due to the intervention of Yitzhak Tabenkin.⁶⁰

International Working Women's Day, which was observed on 12–13 March 1937, was used in Ein Harod for holding a special ceremony for its own children and for those of Tel Yosef. The legitimacy for holding such an event was based entirely on the prominence that the status of women had gained at that time throughout the Jezreel Valley. Of especial interest, in this context, was a booklet dedicated to Working Women's Day, edited by Lilia Bassewitz, which included moving descriptions by eleven women from Tel Yosef and Ein Harod of their guard duty experiences.⁶¹ An announcement issued by the Women Workers' Council on the occasion of International Working Women's Day said:

It is hard to accept this certainty, that in the whole world the woman will reach equality on the battlefield before she reaches it in her working, productive life. But when we have to defend life and freedom, and protect human rights from their desecrators and oppressors, the working woman will not stand aloof. We know that here, in Palestine, too. The woman has emerged from the test of the riots imbued with a sense of responsibility and a desire for full participation in guarding and in positions of danger. Both her political awareness and her sense of self-worth, both in days of peace and in times of trial, have increased.⁶²

The constant, growing tension between the prevalent self-image of the Jews as moral, peace-loving people and the principle of defending their life and dignity in Palestine, both of which were formative elements of the Zionist movement, was a prominent feature of that period.⁶³

The seminar for women members of Hashomer Hatzair opened in Hadera, after a few delays, on 6 April 1937 and lasted for about three weeks, until 25 April. The purpose of the seminar, which was headed by Emma Levin-Talmi, was to provide potential emissaries of Hashomer Hatzair in Palestine, but mostly overseas, with ideological and educational training, and it was attended by 27 women from 25 kibbutzim. Two goals were set for the seminar: the first one was to form a cadre of women who would undertake to carry out public missions in Palestine or abroad "whenever necessary." The second one was to facilitate informal acquaintance between the male activists of the movement and women members who were willing and able to serve as its emissaries. "The woman," explained a letter sent to the kibbutzim, to inform them about the program of the seminar, is "diffident by nature. We do not know her outside the boundaries of the kibbutz. There are few women who make themselves available for wider activities, and still fewer who are called upon for work by our institutions, since they do not know who they are, they are not familiar with them." The fact that the seminar was intended for women only was, in itself, an innovation in kibbutz practice, which was ideologically committed to eliminating the differences between the sexes. The 22 speakers at the seminar were all men. The only occasions on which women also lectured were the "party" for women on the kibbutz and moshav, and a lecture by Feige Ilanit on the Spanish Civil War. It is reasonable to assume that the security situation in Palestine, including the women's wish to participate in guard duty, was also discussed at the seminar, but it was not mentioned in the titles of the lectures.⁶⁴

At the convention of Hakibbutz Ha'artzi, which was held a few weeks before the seminar opened, Ya'ari declared that it was a stage in "the policy of activating the women." He lauded the large number of women participating in the convention, which he saw as proof that the barriers between the sexes could fall in the area of political consciousness too, and added, somewhat bombastically: "I believe that our dream will come true and that the crooked shall be made straight." Needless to say, at the next convention of the movement, which took place in July and dealt with the Peel Commission's recommendation to partition Palestine, only one out of the thirty speakers in the debate was a woman – Rega Varshaviak of Kibbutz Mizra.⁶⁵ Aside from the seminar's influence on the continued involvement of the women of Hakibbutz Ha'artzi in the public life of their movement (as emissaries and in

organized activities of women in various areas), which warrants a separate, detailed examination, it seems that the main impact was left by the absence of the leader, Ya'ari, who suffered from poor health at that time. The participants in the seminar wrote him a letter with heartfelt wishes for his recovery, and Ya'ari, touched by the gesture, answered them in a letter of his own (which he took care to have published in *Hedim*, the movement's journal), in which he related that he always "breathed" the fate of many thousands of people, since "no private life is richer than a life that merges with a large community," and wished them to benefit from this "outstanding gift" in their activity.⁶⁶

The first seminar for women initiated by the Women Workers' Council, which was attended by about 70 women from both the kibbutzim and the towns, opened at Beit Brenner (the home of the Workers' Council) in Tel Aviv on 6 June 1937 and lasted twenty days. The seminar included, as expected, a variety of lectures about the Histadrut, the family, and "The Woman in the Liberation Movement," but "a talk about security questions" with Shaul Meirov (Avigur) and Eliyahu Golomb, the two senior commanders of the Haganah, was also on the program. Had it not been for the women's rebellion a year earlier, it is doubtful that the organizers of the seminar would have even considered inviting them to speak at that forum. The most outstanding feature of the seminar, however, was its lineup of speakers. Thirteen of the 34 speakers were women.⁶⁷ Two of them merit specific mention. The seminar was open to the public, and prominent among the audience was 72-year-old Puah Rakovsky – "a strange woman," according to Rachel Katznelson, the organizer – who attended all the lectures, in order "to get become closely acquainted with the working women of Palestine." On one occasion, at the request of the participants, she agreed to tell them her life story. Rakovsky, who had immigrated two years earlier, had been among the first Zionist activists in Poland, one of the first Hebrew teachers in Warsaw, and the founder of a school for girls there. But, more than anything else, she had been etched in the collective memory of her contemporaries as the founder of the Zionist Women's Movement and the Organization for Equal Rights for Jewish Women in Poland. Katznelson related that, when listening to her, participants felt that "what reached us was the choked voice of a generation of women who had no redeemer – neither a poet nor a historian."⁶⁸ On 20 June, before the discussion with Meirov and Golomb, Manya Shochat spoke about the role of women in Hashomer, a lecture that later became her classic article on this subject. Between the lines, and against the background of the events of 1937 and the increasing awareness of the importance of women's participation in guard duty, Shochat expressed remorse about the fact that women had been excluded from security activity during the Second *Aliyah* period.⁶⁹ When summing up the seminar of the Women Workers' Council, Rachel Katznelson chose to highlight the importance of women leaders, noting that "it is hard to imagine what it meant for every participant in the seminar to meet each distinguished woman, what encouragement it was, as well as evidence of the unused and unredeemed lofty powers that reside in her too."⁷⁰

In spite of Tabenkin's great sensitivity to the status and value of women in kibbutz society, including the importance of integrating them in the security sphere, which he regarded as increasingly essential during the Arab Revolt, in the seminar of Hakibbutz Hame'uhad, which he initiated in early November 1936 and eventually headed, only four of the more than 70 lecturers were women. The seminar, which, took place in Ein Harod and Tel Yosef from 2 May to 11 October 1937, was attended by 82 members of Hakibbutz Hame'uhad, of whom 23 were women, apparently due to Tabenkin's intense involvement in selecting the participants. The kibbutzim of the movement had been told in advance that "a considerable number of women" would attend the seminar. Another sign of the time was the fact that, when completing the questionnaire they were given at the beginning of the seminar, none of the women failed to mention that they served in the Haganah.⁷¹

Although the guideline laid down by Hakibbutz Hame'uhad that a third of the members of its institutions should be women was not fully implemented, the fact that 28% of the participants in this prestigious activity were women was undoubtedly an exceptional achievement in the conditions of those days. During the seminar, a memorial service was held to mark the anniversary of Freund's death. One of the participants, Haim Fish (Dan), a member of Ramat Hakovesh, described Freund's background, in one of the poor alleys of Poritzk, a *shtetl* in the region of Volyn (in Poland, now in Ukraine), and added: "The story of her life, to her last day, was that of stages of overcoming the concepts and lifestyle of a provincial town, natural weakness, and inferiority. All her life she strove to be worthy of standing with the first in line, always – until her very last night."⁷² Freund's almost built-in "inferiority" as a woman was actually reversed, and, with the stroke of a few words, she became the "ideal type" that Hakibbutz Hame'uhad wanted to present as a symbol and exemplary model – "always first in line" (in the spirit of "we are always first," in the words of the future anthem of the Palmah), ready for a pioneering life in the homeland.

The women's struggle in Hakibbutz Ha'artzi movement was also seen when, in July 1937, Kibbutz Ein Hashofet was established according to the *Homah u-Migdal* (Tower and Stockade) method of quickly erecting and fortifying new settlements. Initially, no woman was supposed to be included in the first group of 30 members who were to settle the land. Rachel, a member of the kibbutz, related that this step was justified by one word – "security," which had turned into "a magic word, silencing rightful and just demands. We seemed to be hearing yet again: a woman does not join the *minyán*. Her place is not by the Holy Ark." Following heavy pressure exerted by the women, it was finally decided that five of the 60 women who belonged to the kibbutz about to be established would join the men in starting the new settlement.⁷³ A few months later, the commanders of Ein Hashofet made a point of denying that "they oppose, in principle, the inclusion of women in guard duty. Our demand is that those considered will be qualified for it."⁷⁴ Needless to say, such a demand was not made of the men.

Gender, defense, and the public status of women during the last years of the Revolt

With the renewal of the Arab Revolt in September 1937, after the Palestinians, backed by the Arab countries, rejected the partition plan proposed by the Peel Commission, the Haganah began to shift its strategy from a defensive ethos to an offensive approach. Moreover, the agricultural settlements gradually ceased to be the main target of the Arab attacks, which were increasingly directed against Jews living in the cities. These changes made it more difficult for women to be actively involved in the military clashes and somewhat undermined their initial success in penetrating spheres of activity that had been closed to them. The emergence of new military bodies within the Haganah – the Field Companies in 1937, Orde Wingate's Special Night Squads in 1938, and the Special Operations Units in 1939 – all of which were offensive combat units that acquired some glory on the battlefield and were lauded as manifestations of the emergence of heroic fighters among the youth of Palestine,⁷⁵ reduced the importance of women's participation in security activities and diverted attention from this issue in some of the kibbutzim.⁷⁶ In a meeting of security activists of Hakibbutz Hame'uhad in late July 1938, Bat-Sheva Haikin, a member of Haganah headquarters, observed that although the legal military cooperation with the British security authorities opened up many operational possibilities for the organization, it had to be taken into account that this situation would change some day. In particular, she noted that the overreliance on security activity enjoying official British backing actually prevented women from participating, since the British were

opposed. Haikin did not deny the importance of cooperating with the British but maintained that in order to prepare for other times women should be trained to perform tasks in the security area.⁷⁷

In 1937–39, the involvement of women in kibbutz security gradually became a routine matter involving a limited number of women, while, as noted, the focus of the conflict moved elsewhere, to the roads and the cities. Although kibbutzim such as Ramat Yohanan to the east of Haifa, Ein Hashofet, and Ramat Hakovesh suffered from repeated attacks, the feeling of being in the “rear,” at a safe distance from the “front,” characterized many of the settlements located in the Jezreel and Jordan valleys, which set the tone in the kibbutz discourse. This was reflected, among other things, in the diminished interest exhibited by the kibbutz population, especially the women, in taking an active part in security matters.⁷⁸ For example, although the security issue was at the center of the discussions at the Histadrut convention that took place on 25–26 July 1938, the speakers made no mention, even indirectly, to the question of women’s military service.⁷⁹ Nevertheless, throughout 1938, the strengthened status of women, resulting from the “women’s rebellion” on Ein Harod in 1936 became more visible in the public sphere of the labor movement.

The signs of discontent that had been fermenting beneath the surface appeared in 1938 in new places. On the occasion of International Working Women’s Day, Degania Alef published a special issue of its bulletin, which contained a prophetic article by Fania Tomashov:

Although the ideological foundations of our movement have mainly been laid by men, the realization of the way and ideas, day by day, hour after hour, *has mainly been determined and will be determined* by women. Gone are the days of superficial suffragism, fighting for “rights” and claiming that the main enemy of women is men, who “do not let her take her place,” but, on the other hand, it is a fateful mistake to think that our mere way of life, which opens the gates of creativity before us, will redeem us. Redemption can only come from within!

The obstacles hindering the woman were inside her, she asserted.⁸⁰ In a different vein, Hayuta Bussel, the most senior among the standard-bearers of the struggle for women’s rights in Hever Hakvutzot, sounded the alarm: “We have been overcome by a deep sleep.”⁸¹ This situation was not apparent in the Histadrut newspaper, *Davar*. For the first time, an advertisement spread across its entire front page informed its readers about the approaching International Working Women’s Day on 1 April 1938. Contrary to the situation in most kibbutzim at that time, the announcement of the Women Workers’ Council, which was also very prominently displayed there, pointed out its contribution “to the molding of a Hebrew working woman, unknown in the diaspora, who fights alongside the working man for Jewish labor as well as for protecting the worker’s dignity and standard of living, and, in nights of danger, knows how to guard and defend.” The announcement also presented the desirable model of imitation for the Jewish working woman: “We have aspired to combine in our movement the defensive power of the woman in Spain, the organizational skill of the English working woman, and the drive to do any kind of work of the Russian one.”⁸² A year later, *Dvar ha-Po’elet* reported with satisfaction that “integrating women in the defense of the country, which already exists, to a great extent, in Finland, will now be implemented in Sweden, as well.”⁸³ Women’s conferences at that time expressed abundant praise for the women who were fighting with the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War, led, of course, by Dolores Ibárruri Gómez, “La Pasionaria.” Their heroism and self-sacrifice were perceived as a model for imitation and as a symbol of uncompromising commitment to the realization of socialist values, as well as of women’s potential to play an active and effective role in the military area.⁸⁴

Two years after the outbreak of the Arab Revolt, Gute Luria, a member of Kibbutz Ein Shemer of Hakibbutz Ha'artzi, who worked there as a teacher, recalled the reaction of the children she taught when they first saw a woman on guard duty, carrying a gun. They looked at her with distrust and mocked her: "Is that your gun? No, it isn't. It belongs to your boyfriend. You just took it." A common saying among children at the time that "the mothers are cowards" contributed to what Luria described as a "storm of conscience" throughout the movement that sought to change the prevalent attitude toward women in kibbutz society. It took great efforts to convince the children that they were wrong and to enable them to perceive the new sight of a woman carrying a weapon as "something" granting the woman "value and dignity, uplifting both her and the little girl – the little woman member" of the future.⁸⁵

The situation in Hakibbutz Ha'artzi at that time was summarized in a blunt, poignant article by Feige Hines (Ilanit), which described how two years earlier women members had assembled spontaneously to express their concern about their status in work, public representation, and security. But despite their protest, they were unable to change this status, "which some consider normal, *a racist theory, of sorts*: this sex and its ability in these areas; that sex and its ability." One year before World War II, with the increasing Nazi persecution of the Jews in Germany, based on racist ideology, Hines chose these harsh words to describe the relations between men and women in the socialist kibbutz society, which prided itself on its goal of equality between the sexes. "The male culture" existing in the kibbutz, she warned, was not hidden from its children, making them skeptical about "any new conquest of the woman in work, guard duty, or social life." Hines, whose son, Uri Ilan, would later be captured and commit suicide in a Syrian prison in 1954, stressed that children saw, understood, and internalized the division of labor prevalent on the kibbutz: "who carries a gun and who commands, who manages the work and who is the youth leader, who addresses the public at a celebration and who eulogizes the dead."⁸⁶ A woman member of Kibbutz Sarid in the Jezreel Valley confessed that in Hashomer Hatza'ir "it is not appropriate now to bring up the women's question and deliberate it openly," fearing it might tarnish the idyllic outer appearance of the movement. She mentioned how, in the early 1930s, her movement had been skeptical of Hakibbutz Hame'uhad and criticized it harshly for adopting a fixed quota for women in its institutions, and admitted that experience had proved that, without compulsory organizational structures, a suitable "idea" was not in itself sufficient to change the women's situation in the kibbutz.⁸⁷

However, it would be incorrect to say that Hakibbutz Ha'artzi did not do anything with regard to the status of the woman. A Committee for Women's Affairs had been established by the movement in 1937, among whose members were Emma Levin-Talmi, Rivka Gurfein, Feige Hines, and Yona Ben-Yaakov. Regional committees operated alongside it and encouraged organization in typical female occupations on the kibbutz, such as kitchen work, supplies, laundry, and health. This indicated the women's desire to find new avenues for their involvement in public life in areas in which they had always been dominant, and thus use their activity for the benefit of the kibbutz. There was increasing awareness of the importance of establishing organizational tools that would facilitate the realization of women's desires in the kibbutz, included the need "to create a cadre of women members, who would turn this activity into their 'profession,'" as Hines defined it.⁸⁸

The assembly of the Women Workers' Council that convened on 18–20 December 1938 was entirely devoted to organizational questions and it was apparently only for the record that its resolutions included the following item: "The assembly points out the need to increase the efforts of the Women Workers' Council to facilitate the integration of women members in guard and security roles. The assembly encourages the women in their endeavors, since the onset of the riots [the Arab Revolt in 1936], to take part in the

self-defense enterprise of the Jewish community in Palestine, and calls on them to continue and persevere on this path.”⁸⁹ But this statement bears evidence of an ongoing process of routinization, whose importance should not be underestimated, since it enabled members to become accustomed to women’s participation in guard duty, which became an integral part of the official, standard goals of the Women Workers’ Movement in Palestine. Dvora Dayan of Nahalal, one of the most senior activists in the labor movement – and the mother of Moshe Dayan, who had just started serving in the Field Companies and who, together with Yigal Feikovich (Allon) from Ginosar, was among the young followers of Yitzhak Sadeh, the most dynamic military figure of the Haganah – succinctly summarized her concern about the upheavals the younger generation was experiencing in those days: “A generation is growing on arms, on brandishing swords. Is there no fear that the whistling of the bullet will erase more sublime melodies?”⁹⁰ Such apprehensions were not addressed, at that time or later, to women in the kibbutzim.

The Women Workers’ Council met again three months later. The political circumstances had changed dramatically: the St. James Conference, convened by the British, had failed to reach a compromise between the Arabs and the Jews; the British showed signs of intending to abandon their policy of encouraging the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine; and the situation in Europe had deteriorated following Germany’s invasion of Czechoslovakia. Rachel Katznelson described the atmosphere as follows: “Human beings, who had been the basis for building a regime of equality, justice, and a desire to develop the spiritual resources inherent in us, have suddenly been revealed to us in a horrible form, more frightening than a wild beast, since animals lack consciousness. This sacrifice is no less painful and injurious than the bloody sacrifices we have had to make.” The official agenda of the proceedings, which took place on 26–27 March 1939, was how International Working Women’s Day should be celebrated a week later. But, due to the circumstances, the discussions actually focused on women’s participation in guarding and defense. The representatives of the urban sector admitted that their contribution in this sphere had been, until then, strikingly modest. Bruria Goldberg from Kfar Sava, for example, related that, compared to the women of the kibbutzim and moshavim, the dozens of women she was meeting and talking to every day were not yet imbued with a “sense of homeland,” and she added: “in a time of emergency, our camp [in the city] feels like a herd when a wolf approaches it. There is no feeling of readiness for battle.” Based on her own experience, Rivka Eizenberg from Tel Aviv described how urban women stayed at home and did not feel the strength of people who had the ability to unite and resist. “It seems to her that some kind of fate oppresses her. I would say that this is the biological tragedy of the woman.”

The women of Hakibbutz Ha’artzi had long ceased to regard this terminology as a useful way of addressing women’s problems. Feige Hindes from Gan Shmuel urged her female comrades to “raise again the banner” of women’s participation in defense as a central goal of the Women Workers’ Movement in Palestine. She reported that although guard duty and the heavy responsibility it involved had been hard for women at first, “now they all do guard duty. They won’t give it up under any circumstances.” Hindes may have exaggerated, but she did admit that the women of the kibbutz movement could not, on their own, establish a solid enough basis for women’s right to participate in guard duty. She asserted that unless all the women of the Histadrut understood that if they did not participate in defense activities they would seem to be “running away from the front,” the goal would not be achieved. Hindes explained that the “bourgeois woman” had already recognized the need to give first aid and assist the fighters, but that was not the main thing at that time: “Dozens and hundreds of women are ready to stand in defense within the line, and we have to take this step forward!”⁹¹ The expression “within the line” was the code name used at that

time for active participation as fighters with appropriate military training. The time had not yet come for that, and it would gradually happen later in the Palmah, but the political discourse and the contemporary situation of women were already primed for the expression of such demands. The announcement of the Women Workers' Council published on the occasion of International Working Women's Day on 3 April included only one reference to the issue of defense: "We shall fight over the place of the working woman in the defense of our enterprise."⁹² This brief sentence was pregnant with meaning.

Two weeks before the outbreak of World War II, *Dvar ha-Po'elet* published a summary of a women's discussion, under the heading "The Woman in Self-Defense." The exact forum and date of the talk are not known, nor is the identity of the speakers, other than Rachel Katznelson, who signed the article. Many of the prominent women mentioned above probably voiced their thoughts at this meeting. The identity of the immediate enemy at that time was unclear: was it the neighboring population engaged in the Arab Revolt, the British, who had published "the White Paper" that sought to put an end to the "state in the making," or maybe the Germans, on the eve of the war in which the Jews were to be the main victim? In any case, the participants in the meeting concluded that if they did not present "a concrete plan" of how their contribution could be used, then "with regard to the woman, merely economic tasks will be offered her." The prevalent feeling among them was that although the Yishuv was on the verge of an era that would require exploiting all the human resources available to it, appropriate ways of integrating women in the imminent struggle according to their abilities would not be found without "a push for comprehensive action" initiated by the Women Workers' Council.⁹³

Although it seemed, for a while, that the appeal of the women's struggle to participate in guard duty had evaporated, and that its relevance had been eroded by the exacerbating security situation, the impression it left in the collective memory of many women in the kibbutz movement endured. Moreover, it demonstrated that a successful social struggle over their status in one area could have an impact on other spheres of life, despite all the difficulties on the way. World War II would give renewed momentum to the struggle of kibbutz women to take an active part in defense activities. This time, they would be joined in considerable numbers by women from the rural towns and cities.⁹⁴

Conclusion

As in other spheres of life in the Yishuv, the kibbutz movement was the creative, pioneering element in the area of guarding as well. While in the days of the Second *Aliyah*, productive work generally – especially in agriculture – was considered the main means of realizing the ideal of national rebirth and the creation of "the new Jew," from the second half of the 1930s the emphasis shifted to the domains of guarding, defense, and the army. The manner in which women perceived the nature and purpose of their struggle to participate in guard duty was, among other things, a reaction against men's views of the relations between the sexes and of the goals that it was "fitting" or "permitted" for women to set themselves in their social and professional activity. Women constantly presented their struggle to participate in guard duty as an essential element in a wider and more significant framework, which not only served the needs of the present but was also intended to impart "worthy" ideological standards to their children – boys and girls alike – regarding the appropriate relations between the sexes.

According to Ministry of Defense data, 21 of the 520 Jews who were killed in Palestine during the Arab Revolt were women (the actual number was probably somewhat higher). Some of them were members of the Haganah, but, except for Freund, they were all killed in Arab attacks and in incidents that occurred while they were not on military

duty.⁹⁵ The struggle of women in the Yishuv to participate in security activities was part of their wider campaign for equality between the sexes in the emerging society in Palestine, and for public recognition of the importance of their contribution to shaping the state in the making. Some of them viewed the involvement in security matters as one of the most important tasks of their generation. The challenges of the Arab Revolt, and later, the years of World War II and the Jewish Resistance Movement (an umbrella organization of the Jewish underground movements in Palestine in 1945–46), would bring more and more women to view security as a crucial field of activity from which women should not be excluded, seeing themselves as equal partners in the realization of the Zionist enterprise.

The tenth anniversary of the State of Israel in 1958 was marked by a great number of events, ceremonies, and celebrations. One of these was held on the 11th of Adar, the anniversary of the battle of Tel Hai. Prime Minister and Minister of Defense David Ben-Gurion chose to refer to this central, symbolic event in the history of Zionism in a speech to a conference of the Working Mothers' Organization in Tel Aviv on women's role in security, from Hashomer to the IDF. He described the line of great Jewish women, from Miriam the Prophetess and Deborah the Judge, through Queen Salome (he added, parenthetically, that the Jews in the Second Temple period had fortunately not yet known about the prohibition on a woman being a queen, which would be issued by Maimonides during the Middle Ages), to the role of Manya Shochat in Hashomer and the contributions of women to the Haganah and to the IDF. In regard to the conscription of women, Ben-Gurion stressed: "Equality in Israel is not possible without equality of obligations. Equality of rights is still not real equality. Without equality of obligations, there is no equality between people."⁹⁶

Translated from Hebrew by David Ben-Nahum

Acknowledgments

This article was written within the framework of a research project (no. 134/08) headed by Professor Anita Shapira, supported by the Legacy Heritage Fund of the Israel Science Foundation. I am grateful to Avner Molcho and Nurit Cohen Levinovsky for their help in collecting documents.

Notes

1. *Yoman Ein Harod*, 5 July 1936, Kibbutz Ein Harod Me'uhad Archive (hereafter EHMA).
2. See for example Barak-Erez, "Al tayasot ve-sarvaniyot matzpun," 65–98.
3. "Megamah mesukenet be-Tzahal" (A dangerous trend in the IDF), editorial, *Ha'aretz*, 26 October 2011.
4. Naveh, "Nashim ve-tzava," 18.
5. See for example Goldstein, *War and Gender*; Noakes, *Women in the British Army*.
6. Izraeli, "Migdur ba-sherut ha-tzva'i be-tzahal", 85–109; Berkovitch, "'Eshet hayil mi yimtzat?'" 277–318; Sasson-Levy, *Zehuyot be-madim*.
7. For an initial historical discussion of this kind in the Yishuv, see Elad, "'Kol bahur va-tov la-neshek,'" 211–51; Efron, "Ahayot, lohamot ve-imahot," 353–80; Blum, "Ha-ishah bi-tnu'at ha-avodah."
8. For women's service in the Haganah, see, for example, *Ha-haganah be-Tel Aviv*, 323–40; Ironi-Avrahami, *Almoniyot be-haki*, 51–82; Eshel, *Ha-bahurot ha-hen*, 49–63.
9. Cf. Near, "Ha-hityashvut ha-ovedet," 529–35. For a variety of issues related to women in the kibbutz, see, for example, Fogiel-Bijaoui, "From Revolution to Motherhood," 211–31; idem, ed., *Ba'ot mi-shtikah*; Kafkafi, "The Psycho-Intellectual Aspect," 188–211.
10. Cf. Bernstein, *Ishah be-Eretz Yisrael*, 69; Near, "What Troubled Them?" 124–25; Melman, "Shulayim ve-merkaz," 253–54.
11. Near, *Rak shvil kavshu raglai*, 250, 262; *Ha-kibbutz be-misparim*, no. 12 (June 1936): 7; *ibid.*, no. 21 (November 1939): 22. Two other kibbutz movements, the Religious Kibbutz Movement

- and Zionist Youth, are not discussed here both for shortage of space and because of the sparsity of relevant material.
12. See, for example, Blum, "Ha-ishah bi-tnu'at ha-avodah," 70–82; Goldstein, *Ba-derekh el ha-ya'ad*, 57–71, 217–23; Shilo, *Etgar ha-migdar*, 181–92.
 13. Slutsky, *Sefer toldot ha-Haganah*, 271, 282–5; Margalit Stern, "He Walked through the Fields."
 14. Fania [Artzi], "Ha-haverah bi-bdidutah" (The lonely woman member), *Mibfanim*, 5 May 1930. See also Near, "What Troubled Them?" 122–30.
 15. Gozal Yitzhak [Yitzhak Tabenkin], "Ba-tnu'ah: Le-she'elot haganatenu" (In the movement: On questions of our defense), *Mibfanim*, 10 December 1929; Brenner, *Ha-Kibbutz ha-Me'uhad ba-Haganah*, 158–59.
 16. *Ha-Shomer ha-Tza'ir*, 15 December 1930; *Mibfanim*, 23 November 1931.
 17. Nemilov, *Ha-tragediyah ha-biyologit shel ha-ishah*; Kafkafi, "Mi-sublimatziyah shel ha-nashiyut," 328. For the gender issue in the early days of Hashomer Hatza'ir, see also Gofer, "Ha-ishah ha-tziyonit," 355–72.
 18. Chazan, "Ma'avakan shel neshot Ein Harod," 59.
 19. "Le-yom ha-po'elet ha-beinle'umi" (On International Working Women's Day), *Dvar ha-Po'elet*, 31 March 1935. For International Working Women's Day, see Kaplan, "On the Socialist Origins," 163–71.
 20. Organizational Committee, "Kinus be-yom ha-po'elet ha-beinle'umi" (Conference on International Working Women's Day), 6 April 1935, Yitzhak Tabenkin Archive, Ramat Efal (hereafter YTA), 15-28/14/1.
 21. Rachel Katznelson, "Be-yom ha-po'elet ha-beinleumi" (On International Working Women's Day), *Dvar ha-Po'elet*, 30 April 1935.
 22. *Yoman Kvutzat Hugim*, 12 April 1936, Kibbutz Beit Hashita Archive.
 23. "Ha-kinus be-Tel Yosef be-yom ha-po'elet" (The conference in Tel Yosef on Working Women's Day), *Yoman Ein Harod*, 12 April 1936, EHMA.
 24. For the agricultural settlement movement during the first wave of the Arab Revolt, see Slutsky, *Sefer toldot ha-Haganah*, 676–88; Brenner, *Ha-Kibbutz ha-Me'uhad ba-Haganah*, 118–31. For the Yishuv during the Arab Revolt, see Shapira, *Land and Power*, 219–76.
 25. See, for example, P., "Ha-ishah ba-haganah" (Women in the Haganah), *Yoman ha-Meshek*, 25 July 1936, Kibbutz Gvat Archive; "Shomeret, mah mi-leil?" (Woman guard, what happened last night?), *Alon Kibbutz Merhavia*, 31 July 1936, Hashomer Hatza'ir Archive, Givat Haviva (hereafter HHA), 103-51.1(1); Woman Member, "Ve-od la-inyan hishtatfut ha-haverah be-shmirah" (Again about the participation of women members in defense), *Yoman Na'an*, 19 August 1936, Kibbutz Na'an Archive.
 26. "Ha-zekhut le-haganah" (The right to defend), *Alon Mishmar ha-Emek*, 10 May 1936, Kibbutz Mishmar Ha'emek Archive.
 27. "She'elot ha-sha'ah" (Burning questions), *Dvar ha-Po'elet*, 10 May 1936.
 28. Lilia Bassewitz, "Ma'avak ha-haverot al shituf ba-shmirah" (Women members' struggle to participate in guard duties), *Dvar ha-Po'elet*, May 1936.
 29. "Shiluvei dvarim: Me-divrei haverot be-shurah shel asefot be-Ein Harod she-hayu mukdashot le-verur she'elat shitufah shel ha-haverah ba-haganah" (Combined words: From the speeches of women members at a number of assemblies at Ein Harod devoted to clarifying the question of women members' participation in defense), *Mibfanim*, June 1936, 83.
 30. Letter of Mordechai Hadash to Aharon Tzizling, 14 June 1936, EHMA, 1/7/4. Over the following few weeks various versions of the letter was published in the Ein Harod bulletin and journals of Hakibbutz Hame'uhad, *Tzror mikhtavim* and *Mibfanim*. See also Brenner, *Ha-Kibbutz ha-Me'uhad ba-Haganah*, 160–61.
 31. Klonimus, "Im hagigat gmar be-meshek ha-po'alot" (Celebration of the end of the course in the working women's farm), *Davar*, 16 October 1933.
 32. Beba Idelson, "Mikhtav hozer" (Circular letter), 22 June 1936, EHMA, 4.7.1.
 33. Protocol of Hakibbutz Ha'artzi Executive Committee in Sarid, 12 May 1936, HHA 5-10.1 (12).
 34. Protocol of the general assembly of Ein Harod, 27 June 1936, EHMA; *Yedi'ot ha-Mazkirut*, no. 11, 29 June 1936, YTA, Hakibbutz Ha'meuhad Archive (hereafter AKM), 2-5/1/1.
 35. Protocol of members' meeting at Ein Harod, 1 July 1936, EHMA; "Hahlatot ha-asefah ha-klalit" (Decisions of the general assembly), *Yoman Meshek Ein Harod*, 3 July 1936, *ibid*.
 36. "Ha-bahurot mitgayesot" (The girls are emlisting), *Alon Mishmar ha-Emek*, 4 July 1936, Kibbutz Mishmar Ha'emek Archive.

37. "Bahurot Merhaviyah ba-shmirah" (The girls of Merhavia on guard duty), *Alon Mishmar ha-Emek*, 22 August 1936, Kibbutz Mishmar Ha'emek Archive.
38. Emma [Talmi], "Zekhut haganah la-haverah" (The woman member's right to defend), *Hedim* (July 1936): 4–6.
39. See, for example, Tzila [Reich], "Al asefat ha-haverot" (On the women members' assembly), *Alon Givat Brenner*, 15 and 23 July 1936, Kibbutz Givat Brenner Archive; a woman member, "Al shivui ha-zekhuyot" (On equal rights), *Alon Kvutzat Na'an*, 17 August 1936, Kibbutz Na'an Archive.
40. Geula Shertok, "Le-shituf ha-haverah ba-haganah" (On women members' participation in defense), *Alon Givat Brenner*, 14 August 1936, Kibbutz Givat Brenner Archive.
41. Protocol of general assembly at Givat Brenner, 8 August 1936, Kibbutz Givat Brenner Archive.
42. Woman member, "Al shivui ha-zekhuyot," *Alon Kvutzat Na'anah*, 17 August 1936, Kibbutz Na'an Archive.
43. "Levat Hayah Freund be-Ramat ha-Kovesh" (Haya Freund's funeral at Ramat Hakovesh), *Davar*, 19 August 1936; *Ramat ha-kovesh*, 66, 120; Rivlin, ed., *Yemei ramah*, 89. Haya Freund was born in Poland in 1913 and immigrated to Palestine in 1934 after agricultural training in Hehalutz.
44. *Ramat Ha-kovesh*, 126.
45. *Ibid.*, 119–21.
46. Rachel Katznelson, "Le-she'elot ha-sha'ah" (On burning questions), *Dvar ha-Po'elet*, 25 October 1936.
47. Protocol of general assembly at Givat Brenner, 8 August 1936, Kibbutz Givat Brenner Archive.
48. Zehava Bergman, "Ha-ishah ha-araviyah veva-me'ora'ot" (The Arab woman and the incidents), *Dvar ha-Po'elet*, 10 June 1936. See also Fleischmann, *The Nation and Its "New" Women*, 123–35.
49. Jessie Sampter, "Something Happened," *Palestine Post*, 31 May 1938. This article was chosen by Berl Katznelson to conclude the controversial book he edited on the unification of the kibbutz movement, *Ha-kibbutz veva-kvutzah: Yalkut le-verur she'elat ha-ihud* (The kibbutz and the kvutzah: Clarification of the question of unification) (1940). See Shapira, *Berl*, 250–22; Haim Ben-Asher, "Ha-hakhamah mi-Givat Brenner" (The wise woman from Givat Brenner), *Davar*, 27 December 1938. See also Badt-Strauss, *White Fire*, 112–19; Blanshay, "Jessie Sampter," 76–82.
50. Jessie Sampter, "Watchwomen" (17 August 1936), *Jewish Frontier*, November 1936, 45, 54.
51. Protocol of conference at Givat Hashlosha, 13 July 1936, YTA, AKM, 15-28/23/7. Sarah Blumenkrantz immigrated from Russia in 1923 and was a member of Kibbutz Tel Yosef until the split in the kibbutz movement in the early 1950s, when she moved to Kibbutz Beit Hashita. Many years later, her daughter, Orna Shimoni, would be one of the founders of the Four Mothers organization, whose public pressure contributed to the decision to withdraw from Lebanon in 2000.
52. Summary of conference on questions of women's work in *Tzror mikhavim*, 20 August 1936, 7–8.
53. Sarah Amster, "Al shmirat ha-haverah" (On women members' guard duty), Kibbutz Merhavia bulletin, 4 September 1936, AHH, 103-51.1(1).
54. Protocol of women members' conference in Sarid, 29–30 August 1936, AHH, 20.1(2); decisions of a conference of women members of Jezreel Valley and Haifa Bay kibbutzim, *Ha-Shomer ha-Tza'ir*, 15 September 1936, 16.
55. Haya [Tanpilov], "She'elot mi-she'elot shonot" (Various questions), *Alon Kibbutz Deganyah Alef*, 12 March 1937, Kibbutz Degania Alef Archive.
56. Fania [Artzi], "Ha'im ha-haverah nadonah le-akrut" (Is the woman member doomed to impotence?), *Alon Kibbutz Deganyah Alef*, 16 February 1937, Kibbutz Degania Alef Archive.
57. Brenner, *Ha-Kibbutz ha-Me'uhad ba-Haganah*, 180.
58. *Protokol ha-mo'atzah ha-11 shel ha-Kibbutz ha-Me'uhad* (Protocol of the 11th Council of Hakibbutz Hame'uhad), Yagur, 2–7 October 1936 (Ein Harod, 1937), 140.
59. *Ibid.*, 144, 199–200.
60. Brenner, *Ha-Kibbutz ha-Me'uhad ba-Haganah*, 165, 202; Protocol of a session of the Women Workers' Council, 22–24 December 1936, Labor Archives, Tel Aviv (hereafter LA), IV-230-5-24A.
61. Lilia Bassewitz, ed., "Ha-haverah ba-shmirah" (The woman member on guard duty) supplement to Ein Harod and Tel Yosef bulletin on International Working Women's Day, 20 March 1937, EHMA; "Shaharit ha-yeladim: Mukdeshet le-'yom ha-po'elet ha-bein-le'umi'" (Children's morning prayer: Dedicated to International Working Women's Day), *Yoman Meshek Ein Harod*, 19 March 1937, *ibid.*
62. Mo'etzet ha-Po'alot, "Le-yom ha-po'elet ha-beinle'umi" (On International Working Women's Day), *Dvar ha-Po'elet*, 11 March 1937.

63. See Shapira, *Land and Power*, 238.
64. Emma Levin and the Secretariat of Hakibbutz Ha'artzi, circular letter no. 13, 16 February 1937, AHH, 5-3.97 (4); Secretariat of Hakibbutz Ha'artzi, *Bulletin*, no. 157, 30 May 1937.
65. "Ba-Kibbutz ha-Artzi" (In Hakibbutz Ha'artzi), *Hashomer ha-Tza'ir*, 1 March 1937, 15; *ibid.*, 15 July 1937, 16.
66. Letter from Ya'ari to members of the seminar, April 1937, AHH, 95-7.26(2). For Ya'ari's illness, see Halamish, *Meir Ya'ari*, 137–41.
67. "Ha-nosim ba-seminar" (The subjects in the seminar), *Dvar ha-Po'elet*, 28 July 1937.
68. R.K. [Rachel Katznelson], "Dmut historit" (A historical figure), *Dvar ha-Po'elet*, 11 August 1940; "Puah Rakovsky bat shmonim" (Puah Rakovsky is eighty years old), *Davar*, 1 July 1945. See also, Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation*, 83–86.
69. "Ha-shavu'ah ha-shlishi" (The third week), YTA, 15-28/12/3; Manya Shohat's lecture on women in Hashomer, 20 June 1937, in Goldshtein, *Ba-derekh el ha-ya'ad*, 264–67. For a reworked version of this lecture, see Manya Shohat, "Ha-ishah ba-Shomer" (Women in Hashomer), *Dvar ha-Po'elet*, October 1937.
70. R.K. [Rachel Katznelson], "Seminar ha-po'alot" (Working women's seminar), *Dvar ha-Po'elet*, 2 August 1937.
71. Protocol of acting secretariat of Hakibbutz Hame'uhad, 2 November 1936, YTA, AKM, 2-4/5/3; letter from Hakibbutz Hame'uhad Secretariat to its kibbutzim, 10 February 1937, *ibid.*, 2-culture/2/1; questionnaires filled out by participants in the seminar, *ibid.*; "Im siyum mifal" (With the end of the project), *Tzror mikhtavim*, 30 October 1937, 1–6.
72. H. Fish, "Le-zekher Haya'e Freund" (In memory of Haya Freund), *Tzror mikhtavim*, 26 August 1937, 22–23.
73. Rahel, "Ha-haverah ba-hityashvut ha-kibushit" (The woman member in conquest of the land in the settlements), *Hedim* (September 1938): 20.
74. "Ba-shmirah uva-gvul" (On guard and on the border), *Alon Kibbutz Ein ha-Shofet*, 11 February 1938, Kibbutz Ein Hashofet Archive, box 4, file 128.
75. Shapira, *Land and Power*, 249–57; Slutsky, *Sefer toldot ha-Haganah*, 911–67.
76. N. [Rachel Katznelson], "Ha-ishah ba-hitgonenut (me-sihat haverot)" (Women on the defensive [from a conversation of women members]), *Dvar ha-Po'elet*, 15 August 1939.
77. Protocol of an activists' discussion on questions of security, 29 July 1938, YTA, AKM, 2-4/5/1.
78. See, for example, Y. H.-G., "Mi-hutz la-bayit" (Outside the home), *Yedi'ot Kinneret*, 19 August 1938, YTA, 16-4-84/1/16.
79. Protocol of 37th Histadrut Council, 25–26 July 1938, LA.
80. Fania Tomashov, "Le-hagah shel ha-po'elet" (On the working woman's festival), 25 March 1938, *Ba-avodah uva-hayim*, 25 March 1938, Kibbutz Degania Alef Archive (my emphasis).
81. Hayuta [Busel], "Le-yom ha-po'elet ha-beinle'umi" (On International Working Women's Day), *Ba-avodah uva-hayim*, 25 March 1938, Kibbutz Degania Alef Archive.
82. Moetzet ha-Po'alot, "Haverot!" (Women comrades!), *Davar*, 1 April 1938.
83. "Hedei ha-zman" (Echoes of the time), *Dvar ha-Po'elet*, 28 March 1939.
84. See "Pasiyonariyah hayah u-fe'ilah" (La Pasionaria is alive and active), *Davar*, 5 January 1937; "Neshei ha-gvurah be-Sfarad" (Heroic women in Spain), *Dvar ha-Po'elet*, 11 March 1937.
85. Gute [Luria], "Emdat ha-haverah ba-kibbutz ke-gorem hinukhi" (Women's position in the kibbutz as an educational factor), *Hedim* (September 1938): 18–19.
86. Feige Hines, "Mah darkenu lehaba?" (What is our future path), *Hedim* (September 1938): 25–26.
87. D., [no title], *Hedim* (September 1938): 23–24.
88. Protocol of a meeting of women delegates of the Agricultural Committee/Council, 10 January 1939, YTA, 15-28/23/6.
89. "Hahlatot ha-moshav" (Decisions of the session), *Dvar ha-Po'elet*, 30 December 1938.
90. Dvora Dayan, "Sikumo shel moshav Mo'etzet ha-Po'alot" (Summary of Women Workers' Council session), *Dvar ha-Po'elet*, 30 December 1938.
91. Protocol of the 18th session of the Women Workers' Council, 26–27 March 1939, YTA, 15-28/12/1.
92. Women Workers' Council, "Le-yom ha-po'elet ha-beinle'umit" (On International Women Workers' Day), *Davar*, 3 April 1939.
93. N. [Rachel Katznelson], "Ha-ishah ba-hitgonenut" (n. 76 above).
94. See, Granit-Hacohen, *Ishah ivriyah el ha-degel*.

95. The information was gathered from the personal information on fallen soldiers cited on the Defense Ministry website where it is not presented as official data. For the number of soldiers killed during the Arab Revolt, see Slutsky, *Sefer toldot ha-Haganah*, vol. 2, pt. 2, 650, 800–2.
96. Protocol of Ben-Gurion's speech at a conference of the organization of Working Mothers, 3 March 1958, Ben-Gurion Archive, Kiryat Sde Boker, Protocols and Speeches.

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