

ISRAEL

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

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

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Summaries

Danny Gutwein

“Bourgeois *Halutziyut*”: Popular Culture and the Ethos of Israel’s “Established Middle Class” – the Lyrics of Naomi Shemer, 1956–1967

The article argues that the lyrics written by Naomi Shemer during 1956–1967 reflect the ethos of Israel’s “established middle class,” which I term “bourgeois *halutziyut*” (pioneering). The established middle class was the power base of Labor Party hegemony in the 1950s and 1960s, accordingly “bourgeois *halutziyut*” as its ethos is a key factor in interpreting Israeli history in these decades. While formally embracing the official labor movement ideology of pioneering austerity and self-sacrifice, the established middle class considered it to be an obstacle to enjoying the material advantages of their privileged social position. This ideological paradox reflected the Labor Party’s socio-economic policy in the first two decades of statehood, which led to fast economic growth along with increasing social gaps. While this policy contradicted the pioneering ethos, it turned the established middle class into its chief beneficiary. Although “bourgeois *halutziyut*” was ignored by official Labor ideology and scholarly research, it was extensively represented in popular culture. And, indeed, as Israel’s most popular songwriter of the time, the oxymoronic nature of “bourgeois *halutziyut*” is repeatedly expressed in Shemer’s lyrics. While appropriating the themes of the classic pioneering songs, she ridiculed their collective values and used them to advance individualistic ones.

Shifra Mescheloff

Rabbi Shlomo Goren’s Zionist Views

This article seeks to place the Zionist views of R. Shlomo Goren, the first chief rabbi of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and later the chief rabbi of Israel, within the framework of his diverse religious concepts concerning the State of Israel. It examines his changing views over the years and the social background leading to these changes. In the early years of his service as the IDF’s chief rabbi, R. Goren considered that the establishment of the State of Israel could lead to the coming of the Messiah, but that this outcome was not certain since it depended on regulating the country’s way of life in accordance with the laws of the Torah. After the Six Day War, he expressed the belief that the results of the war marked the beginning of the redemption, and hoped for a radical change in the religious character of the nation. In later years, disappointed that such a change was not forthcoming, he retracted his statements reverting to his previous doubts as to whether the Jewish State was the fulfillment of the prophecy of the redemption. The article

also considers how R. Goren's Zionist views influenced his halakhic decisions on the celebration of Independence Day and Jerusalem Day.

Mordechai Bar-On

David and Goliath in the War of Independence: Power Relations, Myth and Realities

The notion that in the Israeli War of Independence the “few” Jews (little David) won the war against the great multitudes of “seven Arab armies” (Goliath) was and still is a central theme in Israelis’ “memories” of that war. Recent research has shown that except for the first five weeks after the invasion of the four regular armies of the Arab states, which were equipped with superior weaponry, during most other periods of the war the Israelis outnumbered the forces the Arabs sent to the battlefield. Nevertheless, just as the Israelis won many battles in which they were outnumbered by their enemies, they also lost battles in which they had a greater number of forces. Surveying the different periods of the war, this article analyzes in greater detail the balance of power during the different phases and in different arenas of the war, seeking to explain the reasons for victory and defeat. The main conclusions are that although the balance of power is only one of many factors that decide the outcomes of military confrontations, miracles do not occur on the battlefield, and the stronger party eventually wins. It also examines the roots of the common myth that many Israelis still adhere to today.

Ofira Gruweis-Kovalsky and Yossi Katz

“The Conquest of the Desert Exhibition and Fair,” 1953

During the 1950s Israel invested effort and resources in participating in exhibitions all over the world. The decision to hold the “Conquest of the Desert Exhibition and Fair” in Jerusalem in September–October 1953 was part of this effort, to which the government accorded great importance. The Cabinet dedicated three meetings to this exhibition. Director General of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs Walter Eytan, who was chairman of the exhibition’s governing council, described the exhibition as a success, since it had strengthened Jerusalem’s status as the capital of Israel. This is the only exhibition until today to have been approved as a special exhibition by the International Bureau of Exhibitions in Paris. Even though it took place in Jerusalem, it was held under the auspices of the UN. It was one of Israel’s first attempts to test the attitude of the international community toward Jerusalem as Israel’s capital.

Anat Plocker

The Severance of Diplomatic Relations between Poland and Israel, June 1967

During the summer of 1967, Poland's communist government moved from condemning Israel as an aggressor to a struggle against "Zionist infiltrators and spies." In the process, all Polish Jews, regardless of their political affiliation, were labeled as Zionists and representatives of Israel. When war broke out in the Middle East in June 1967, Ministry of Internal Affairs officials, in charge of the security police, informed Władysław Gomułka, First Secretary of the Polish United Workers' Party (communist party), that the Jewish minority had sided with Israel and had rejected the pro-Arab party line, thus fulfilling its treacherous potential. In mid-June, Gomułka publicly called Polish Jews a "fifth column," i.e. traitors, thus launching the first wave of a vicious anti-Zionist campaign. The Ministry of Internal Affairs and party officials began to seek out and purge Polish Jews working for the party and state administration. When student protests demanding political reforms erupted in Poland in March 1968, the Ministry of Internal Affairs blamed Jews and saw the demonstrations as the continuation of an ongoing Zionist effort to undermine socialism in Poland that had begun in June 1967. The communist leadership perceived the ensuing attack on Polish Jews, which included more purges and a large-scale press campaign, as an act of defense against the enemies of the Polish socialist homeland.