

TEL-AVIV UNIVERSITY  
THE CHAIM ROSENBERG SCHOOL OF JEWISH STUDIES  
THE INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH IN THE HISTORY OF ZIONISM  
FOUNDED IN MEMORY OF CHAIM WEIZMANN



# ZIONISM

STUDIES IN THE HISTORY OF THE ZIONIST MOVEMENT  
AND OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN PALESTINE

XVI

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Tel-Aviv University  
Hakibbutz Hameuchad  
Publishing House  
Printed in Israel, 1991

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**The Institute for Research in the History of Zionism founded in memory of Chaim Weizmann 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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### Shmuel Feiner / SMOLENSKIN'S CONFRONTATION WITH THE *HASKALAH* MOVEMENT AND THE ROOTS OF JEWISH NATIONALIST HISTORIOGRAPHY

From the beginning of the 1870s, Peretz Smolenskin, a Russian-born Jewish intellectual and editor of *Ha-Shahar* in Vienna, launched a fierce attack upon what he believed to be the devastating influence of Moses Mendelssohn and the 'Berlin Haskalah' on the Jewish people. His denial of the accepted belief that Mendelssohn and the *Haskalah* movement represented the positive trend in modern Jewish history, opened an animated literary controversy. This was criticism levelled from within, not from the Orthodox opponents of the movement for Enlightenment, criticism that served the new nationalist conceptions of Smolenskin and his belief that priority had to be given to the struggle against the anti-nationalist trends from which the continued existence of the Jewish people had more to fear than from the 'rebels against the Enlightenment'.

For Smolenskin, Moses Mendelssohn was the father of the concept which would replace the Jewish national identity with no more than a religious identification. As he developed his concept of Jewish nationalism, Smolenskin also laid the groundwork for modern Jewish nationalist historiography. Since he placed Jewish history on the same level as the Bible and the Hebrew language as spiritual heritages of the Jewish nation, he deemed the writing of a new national history to be of immediate importance, not in the least as an alternative to that of Heinrich Graetz. Smolenskin was not a historian and did not himself compile the ideal historical work which he preached, but his essays in *Ha-Shahar* were the outline of a national history, and in them he proposed the foundation upon which he believed that the superstructure of a new national historiography should be constructed.

### Chava Moodrik / THE HISTORIOGRAPHICAL CONTROVERSY OVER THE *BILUIM*

Much has been written about the *Biluim*, the pioneer movement that is enveled in myth. The article presents three historiographical evaluations of the *Biluim* as evidenced in the research of three scholars.

Shlomo Ne'eman represents the maximalist approach which considers *Bilu* to be a triple success: as an idea, as a movement which gave birth to the Hibbat Zion ('Love of Zion') movement and the idea of political Zionism, and as a settlement organization. His attitude towards the movement is not necessarily grounded in the documents and sources, and at times is based on emotional subjectivity.

Shulamit Laskov represents a more cautious approach which considers *Bilu* to be a moderate success – it failed as a movement but succeeded as a settlement organization, and it is this success that turned it into a symbol for future generations. Her approach is grounded in a careful and critical reading of the

documentary evidence produced by the *Biluim* themselves.

Yosef Salmon uses the same documentation, but comes to completely different conclusions. He scrutinizes the history of *Bilu* with hindsight, but not within the contemporary framework, and thus expresses the minimalist approach which considers it to be a failure, a movement whose ideology was unrelated to the real conditions of the time. It was only due to its continuators in the successive waves of immigration, who transformed *Bilu* into a model and a symbol, that it remained more than a passing episode in Zionist history.

All three of these historians do not disagree over the facts. Their differing approaches result from the adoption of different starting points and evaluations, which lead them to opposing conclusions. They provide us with an example of the dynamics inherent in the historiography of Zionist settlement in Eretz Yisrael.

### Moshe Halevy / MAX NORDAU'S PATH TO ZIONISM

After a lengthy discussion of the 'Jewish Question' with Max Nordau, Herzl noted in his diary on 17 November 1895: "Nordau will, I believe, go with me through thick and thin. He was my easiest conquest and possibly the most valuable to date". However, many of Nordau's contemporaries found it difficult to understand how one such as he, so steeped in European culture and with a reputation as author, publicist and critic, abandoned the universal arena for such a specific issue like Zionism.

Nardau's turn to Zionism was a complex process. As a liberal and a proponent of the superiority of reason in every field of human endeavor, he was shocked by the vicissitudes of fin-de-siècle Europe, marked by the growing popularity of anti-liberal ideas. Nordau considered modern literature and art, which he described as decadent, to be a clear expression of European society's defection from the principles of rationalism. Disappointed with Western-European society, he began to believe that as a liberal and a Jew his place was no longer in a society that had deteriorated, from the moral point of view, into such a state of spiritual, social and political decadence of which antisemitism was one of the expressions,

This transformation of European society, which, he believed, held the seeds of tragedy, prompted him to re-examine his identity. Whereas in the past he had identified himself as a German, believing that an individual's national identification was determined first and foremost by one's culture – and especially by the language he spoke – Nordau now concluded that national identification is not determined only on the basis of subjective, volitional elements but also by objective ones, such as ethnic origin. Therefore, Nordau's adoption of Zionism was influenced, more than anything else, by his despair of European society's capability to extricate itself from the deep spiritual, social and political crisis into which it had fallen in the last decades of the nineteenth century.

### Shalom Ratzaby / THE SOURCES OF HUMANISTIC NATIONALISM WITHIN THE YISHUV

The article traces the sources of one school of humanistic nationalism which grew out of and developed against the background of political conditions in Eretz Yisrael. The leading protagonists were Central-European Jews such as A.E. Simon, G. Scholem, S.H. Bergman and others who were active in the 'Brith Shalom' and 'Ihud' movements. Most of them were members of the Third Aliya and shared its values. Their influence, much greater than their numbers would hint at, can be put down to their unique status. They were historians, philosophers and educators, but in no manner could they be called politicians in the usual sense of the word. Being what they were, they evaluated their political activity in terms of ideals and ideas in the tradition of German philosophy.

The article describes the connections of their ideals to the thought of Ahad Ha'am and Buber and their interpretation of the essence of Zionism, on one hand, and their link to Central European utopian socialism, on the other. What emerges is a portrayal of a Zionist philosophy that, on the face of it, was influenced by Ahad Ha'am's national philosophy but whose extent and dimensions are much wider than his thinking on both national and Jewish questions. This can be attributed to their understanding of Judaism, but also to their socialist inclinations, which they adopted from Central-European utopian socialism and its outstanding proponent in Eretz Yisrael – Aharon David Gordon.

### Yehuda Riemer / THE PIONEERING ALIYA FROM NORTH AMERICA IN THE EARLY THIRTIES

The Beginning of the thirties brought to Eretz-Yisrael several hundred *halutzim* (pioneers) from the United States and Canada. Motivated by the challenge to Zionism posed by the Arab riots of 1929 as well as the economic pressures and ideological disappointments of the Great Depression, the *Olim* (immigrants) were for the most part poorly organized and ill prepared for what lay ahead. As a result most of them left the country, though some returned years later after acquiring a profession. About 150 adjusted and found their place in various labor settlements.

This article dwells upon the origins of this aliya, the social, educational and professional background of the *halutzim*, their ideals and their encounter with the realities of Eretz-Yisrael. The main groups discussed are the Detroit Kvutza, Kibbutz Aleph of Hashomer Hatzair and the Young Poale Zion groups that joined Degania Bet, Afikim and Na'an, as well as the Moshav groups Herut Aleph and Bet.

Most of the *olim* did not come from material want, but out of spiritual needs and were often inspired by an innocent and somewhat naive idealism. Their high individual potential did not come to fruition because of poor gui-

dance, insufficient training and neglect on the part of the institutions and organizations of the Yishuv, who for the most part lacked either the means or the interest to make special allowances for them. Neither did the old-time settlers show much sympathy for the cultural background and personal needs of the Americans, but expected them to assimilate into their society. As happened with most *aliyot* (waves of immigration), a successful absorption was to a large extent due to the efforts of the *olim* themselves.

Since hopes of establishing a pure American kibbutz could not be realized, the solution found was the creation of strong American groups which then joined with *halutzim* from other countries, forming units capable of establishing a settlement. In the history of the American pioneering aliya the thirties are thus a period of trial and error, resulting in improved methods of education, training and organization, which enabled later groups of American *halutzim* to be absorbed more successfully.

#### Avihu Ronen / "YOUTH CULTURE" AND THE ROOTS OF THE IDEA OF RESISTANCE IN THE GHETTO (YOUTH MOVEMENTS IN ZAGLEBIE DURING THE HOLOCAUST)

Youth culture (Jugendkultur) was the main feature of youth movements in Poland between the two world wars. By analysing the activities of youth movements in Zagłębie (south-west Poland) during the Holocaust, it is shown, that the idea of resistance was rooted in this youth culture.

The activity of the youth movements in Zagłębie during the first period of Nazi occupation (1939–1942) aimed to preserve their own youth culture adapted to the new conditions. Youth movements held secret meetings, established underground schools, celebrated national holidays, and maintained a collective farm which functioned as a "kibbutz".

Keeping their unique culture, the youth movements became a sub-culture within the Jewish community which was now controlled by the Judenrat. Youth movements' activists cooperated with the Judenrat in education and welfare activities, but opposed the Judenrat's obedient policy towards the Germans.

Following the first wave of deportations from Zagłębie to Auschwitz (Spring 1942), this cultural system developed into an armed underground. This crucial step was not a mere protest of young Jews against the Germans; it was the realization of the values, symbols and norms, successfully preserved during the Nazi occupation.

#### Roni Stauber / THE RELIEF AND RESCUE COMMITTEE AND THE ZIONIST LEADERSHIP IN BUDAPEST ON THE EVE OF NAZI OCCUPATION

During 1943 secret contacts toward establishing a separate peace were conducted between the Hungarian government and representatives of the western



Allies. As a result, close relations were established between the leaders of the Zionist movement and important figures in the Hungarian government. At the heart of these contacts was the relationship established between the Relief and Rescue Committee in Budapest, headed by Israel Kasztner, and representatives of the Jewish Agency and Jewish organizations in the neutral countries, especially in Turkey. The Hungarians were interested in exploiting this connection to further their relations with the West. As a result of these contacts the Hungarian government allowed the Zionist movement to conduct its activities not only in Budapest, but all over Hungary as well.

A short time after the German occupation, the members of the Committee, especially Kasztner, began to make contact with the SS in order to attempt to rescue the Jews of Hungary. Himmler and the SD leadership viewed the relations with Zionist activists in a similar way as did the Hungarian government prior to the occupation. They were also interested in exploiting the Jewish power in the democratic countries to further secret negotiations with the West. The members of the Committee, especially Kasztner, sought to take advantage of this antisemitic outlook, which was extremely common among the Nazi hierarchy, in order to attempt to rescue Hungarian Jewry from total destruction.

### Shulamit Eliash / FROM SEMBEL TO GILGIL THE WANDERINGS OF ETZEL AND LEHI MEMBERS FROM ONE BRITISH DETENTION CAMP TO ANOTHER IN AFRICA

Hundreds of Irgun Zvai Leumi (Etzel) and Lehi members arrested by the British in Palestine and exiled to Africa were held in detention camps there from late October 1944 until early July 1948. During their period of detention they were transferred to different sites throughout the continent. From the first camp in Sembel, Eritrea, they were moved in January 1945 to Carthaga, in the Sudan. In October of that year they were returned to Sembel only to be moved again in March 1947 to Gilgil, Kenya, where they remained until their release and return to Israel.

The main cause of their wanderings were the difficulties encountered by the British in holding the detainees in African territories. These difficulties flowed from the very real fear of the prisoners entertained by the authorities of those territories, a fear which was grounded in the name that the Etzel and Lehi had made for themselves as groups of vicious terrorists, though this characterization was often exaggerated and unrealistic. The Sudanese authorities, under the impression made by the assassination of Lord Moyne in Cairo by members of Lehi, were apprehensive of the security risk involved in holding the detainees on their territory and found a legal excuse to have them removed from the Sudan. As for the military administration in Eritrea and the colonial government of Kenya, both were faced with domestic unrest caused by growing oppositionary elements, and thus they considered the detainees from Eretz Yisrael to be a security burden which should be shed.