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THE CHAIM ROSENBERG SCHOOL OF JEWISH STUDIES
THE INSTITUTE FOR ZIONIST RESEARCH
FOUNDED IN MEMORY OF CHAIM WEIZMANN



ZIONISM

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

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SUMMARIES

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BILU – AN EMANCIPATORY MOVEMENT AND A SETTLEMENT GROUP

by Shlomo Na'aman

The history of the Bilu movement deserves to be reconsidered in order to restore the balance between its standing within the Hibbat Zion movement and its more circumscribed role as a group of settlers in Gadera, as it emerges from Shulamit Laskov's study (*The Biluim*, Jerusalem 1979).

The slogan, "House of Jacob come let us go," expressed the negation of Russia as a homeland and the ambition to direct the fugitives of the 1882 pogroms to the Land of Israel.

The Biluim established their Constantinople bureau in order to negotiate the cession of Government lands, the right of immigration, and settlement credits with the Ottoman authorities. But once conditions in Russia seemed to be returning to normal, the pressure which had promoted the Bilu activity subsided.

Thereafter Bilu was supported only by the more radical wing of the not religiously motivated *Maskilim* within the Hibbat Zion movement and by members of academic youth groups, who became the core around which the emancipatory – nationalist section of the Hibbat Zion crystallized

The Biluim and their supporters anticipated the expansion of anti-Semitism and increasing alienation between Jews and Gentiles. In their view, settlement in the Land of Israel was a form of auto-emancipation and their special task was to establish a model settlement, from which all colonization activities were to be directed and academic youth enlisted for the fulfilment of its duties.

The Biluim eventually established the Bilu Society, with a hierarchic-centralist constitution, providing for different degrees of membership. The Active Members were to undertake national service for three years before settling down, after which they were to form a reserve force for the mobilized body.

The Biluim established the settlement of Gedera after Baron de Rothschild, who had become the patron of the languishing settlements, had rejected their hierarchic-centralist ideas. Their great vision could not come to fruition in the narrow confines of one small settlement, although some of their democratic principles – such as self-rule and free internal elections – were implemented there, and their local school became the most advanced and nationally orientated Jewish school in the country.

The great vision of the Biluim, encompassing the direction of Jewish migration towards Palestine and the concept of a planned construction of Jewish settlement there, was eventually taken up by later immigrants.

CLASSICAL ZIONISM AND MODERN ANTI-SEMITISM (1883–1914)

by Joachim Doron

Zionism never contented itself with the territorial solution of the Jewish problem. One of its main goals was the moral and physical regeneration of the so-called *Golusjude*. Thus, classical Zionism always contained a strong element of self-criticism.

This Jewish self-reproach actually originated with Jewish liberalism, but the Zionist version was rather different. While the Jewish liberal apologists wanted to adapt the newly emancipated Jew to the standards of civil society so as to create a sort of Kantian Judaism, Zionist self-reproach aimed at the total regeneration of the Jewish people as a whole. While Jewish

liberals mildly moralized about pre-emancipatory types like the pedlar, the *Shnorrer* and the *Talmudjude*, Zionism sharply criticized the new stereotypes who had appeared in the Second Reich: the boorish upstart, the *nouveau riche* and the unscrupulous financier. Zionist self-persiflage was therefore essentially anti-capitalistic. Moreover, while the liberal apologists tried to conceal certain “Jewish” scandals from the public eye, Zionists like Birnbaum, Nordau, Ruppin, Bodenheimer, Herzl and many others generally accepted some of the anti-Semitic arguments and did not hesitate to denounce Jewish vices. Some Zionists even held the “aristocratic” way of life of the Central European pseudo-feudal élites in high esteem. They also laid more stress than their liberal co-religionists on the aesthetic and physical demeanour of the Jew.

This special form of Jewish self-reproach could not appear in the East European *Shtetl* nor in America. East European Jews, who lived among a backward and Jew-baiting population, were mentally immune to Jew hatred. On the other hand, across the Atlantic Jews fitted in with an open society, free from semi-feudal values, corporative taboos and pre-capitalistic bonds. Only in Central Europe did the rigid ethics of Lutheranism and the social ethos of the old middle classes combine to form a rigorously normative society, to which the emancipated Jew had to adapt himself.

The main enemy of the early Zionists, between 1883 and 1914, were not the anti-Semites but the liberal assimilationists, whom they attacked in a caustic, sometimes vitriolic style, using anti-Semitic arguments and stereotypes. Many Zionists – such as Birnbaum, Nordau, Herzl, Bodenheimer and Ruppin – believed that there had always existed two strata in the Jewish people, of which the evil one, named “Mauschel” by Herzl, was the cause of all anti-Semitic accusations.

IDEOLOGY AND POLICY IN RELIGIOUS ZIONISM –
RABBI YITZHAK YA'AKOV REINES' CONCEPTION OF
ZIONISM AND THE POLICY OF THE MIZRAHI UNDER
HIS LEADERSHIP

by Eliezer Don-Yehiya

The case of Rabbi Yitzhak Ya'akov Reines, founder of the religious Zionist Mizrahi movement, can serve as an instructive illustration of the general problem of ideology versus policy.

Unlike the majority of religious Zionist thinkers, Reines regarded Zionism not as the "Beginning of the Redemption," but as a movement whose principal aim was to save the Jews from repression and persecution by providing them with a country of their own. While Reines' predecessors – especially Rabbis Kalischer and Alkalai – believed that the emancipation of the Jews prepared the ground for a national renaissance in their historic homeland, Reines' Zionism was rooted in deep disappointment with Jewish emancipation. As he saw it, the moving forces of Zionism were the push of anti-Semitism and Jewish plight in the Diaspora rather than the pull of the Land of Israel and the vision of redemption.

This approach facilitated the integration of Mizrahi in the Zionist movement, whose leaders were not religious, and enabled Rabbi Reines to argue that there was no contradiction between religion and Zionism. He stressed the practical character of Zionism in order to refute the contention that it was meant to substitute religion.

Reines' conception of Zionism made for a natural alliance between Mizrahi and the Herzlian Political Zionists, who also sought to solve the "problem of the Jews" by providing them with a safe asylum. Moreover, it explains Mizrahi's support of the Uganda project in 1903–1905 as a measure aimed at relieving the plight of the Jews. Reines' opposition to the inclusion of cultural and educational activity in the Zionist

programme was also in line both with his basic concepts and with the attitude adopted for reasons of their own by the Political Zionists.

THE RISE OF THE JEWISH “SERVICE ARISTOCRACY” IN PALESTINE – MOSHE SHERTOK AND HIS COMRADES JOIN THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

by Gavriel Sheffer

When David Ben-Gurion and other leaders of the young Zionist-Socialist parties laid down the ideological, political and economic foundations of the Jewish labour movement in Palestine, a new generation was growing up in the country which later produced some of the most outstanding members of the movement’s leadership.

This group of promising recruits to the labour movement had its own peculiar characteristics: its members were educated in the schools which had been established by the new *Yishuv* in Palestine; their personal and political socialization occurred within the framework of the *Yishuv*’s institutions; they all came from middle class families; and they experienced the difficulties which confronted the national movement. In view of their personal and family backgrounds, the nature of their education and the fact that the labour parties were still small and budding organizations, this group’s inclinations and its members’ ultimate decision to join the labour movement clearly call for an explanation.

This article therefore examines the personal and environmental background of a part of the labour élite – including Moshe Shertok (Sharett) and Eliahu Golomb – whose members grew up in Palestine, as well as the first stages in their rise to leadership positions within the labour camp. The article also examines their political views, the patterns of their early

political activity and the mode of their recruitment to and absorption into the labour movement. Their political development is traced within the wider context of the *Yishuv* and the Zionist movement, since the processes which propelled the Zionist labour movement into a position of hegemony to a large extent determined the chances of these young people eventually to attain senior leadership positions within the national movement.

Gradually the group became what can be termed the “service élite” of the Zionist movement and the *Yishuv*. For them the elements of relentless service, self-discipline and total dedication to the achievement of the goals of the *Yishuv* became a major political target and mission.

PINHAS RUTENBERG'S INITIATIVE TOWARDS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF JEWISH BATTALIONS AT THE BEGINNING OF WORLD WAR I

by Mattityahu Mintz

Jewish and Zionist historiography has always woven the story of the Jewish battalions in World War I around the personality of Ze'ev Jabotinsky. Yet Pinhas Rutenberg's role in promoting the idea is of considerable interest.

As early as August 1914 Rutenberg conceived a programme based on two assumptions: 1) that an Allied victory was of vital importance to democracy and socialism; 2) that wartime circumstances must be utilized for the promotion of Jewish national interests, chiefly by creating a basis for negotiations between Jewish representatives and the Allied Powers through the enlistment of Jewish volunteers to fight on the Allied side.

A study of the relevant files in the archive of the Paris branch of the Russian Okhrana revealed – rather unexpectedly – that Rutenberg's proposal must be seen in the context of his ongoing

ties with the Russian Social Revolutionaries. The Okhrana documents indicate that Rutenberg's activity in August–September 1914 was closely coordinated with his party colleagues, who supported the policy of defending Russia and whose international connections facilitated Rutenberg's activity on behalf of the Jews. Rutenberg at the same time presented a memorandum on behalf of the Social Revolutionaries in which he set out to define the framework for discussions between his party and the Allies with regard to the future Russian regime. The author assumes that the interest in an Allied victory brought forth the thought that it was impossible to reduce the Jews' hostility towards Russia and their growing sympathy for Germany without involving a direct Jewish interest in the outcome of the war. In addition, there was the problem of Russian Jews in Allied and neutral countries who refused to serve in the Russian army. A similar sentiment prevailed among Russian *émigrés* in the West, for whom the establishment of Russian units for service on the western front was being considered. A like solution for the Russian Jews naturally came to mind, leading to the idea that their enlistment might be undertaken on condition that it be carried out as part and parcel of a general understanding between the Allied Powers and official representatives of the Jewish people.

The author traces Rutenberg's efforts to promote his ideas, his diplomatic contacts and the circumstances underlying the plan's weakness, as well as Rutenberg's reasoning for the inclusion of Jabotinsky in the initiating team.

BRITISH POLICY ON IMMIGRATION TO PALESTINE
DURING THE HOLOCAUST – THE LAST STAGE

by Ronald Zweig

By mid-1940 the shortage of available shipping and the pressures of war had reduced the flow of illegal immigration into Palestine to a trickle. A sudden revival of the traffic in the autumn of 1940 found the British authorities fully resolved to enforce a policy of deportation, which culminated in the tragedy of the *Patria*. Except for the *Darien*, whose passengers were held in detention during 1941 pending arrangements for their deportation, no further ships of illegal immigrants reached Palestine until the *Struma* came to HMG's attention in October 1941. The decision to take a firm stand against the refugees on the *Struma*, followed by the sinking of the ship, led to a public outcry which encouraged the Colonial Office to revise its administration of the White Paper provisions on immigration. But the reaction to the fate of the *Struma* was only one factor in a slow process of relaxation of immigration restrictions. The factor which did most to bring about a liberalization was the realization that the decline in both legal and illegal immigration due to the war meant that Britain would not be able to dispose of the 75,000 immigration certificates available under the White Paper before the date by which Jewish immigration was to stop. This, it was recognized, would undermine the White Paper policy. As news of the fate of European Jewry under the Nazis became widespread, the existence of unused immigration certificates was also extremely embarrassing for Britain. Thus, by the war's end, many of the measures taken against illegal immigration since the release of the White Paper had been revoked. Nevertheless, Jews were no longer able to reach Palestine, and Britain's record on the immigration question during the war left a heritage of bitterness between the *Yishuv* and the Mandatory government, and did much to radicalize the *Yishuv*.

AL-DOMI – A GROUP OF INTELLECTUALS –
AND THE HOLOCAUST, 1943–1945

by Dina Porat

Al-Domi was a small protest movement which was active in Palestine during the years of the Holocaust. Its members were intellectuals, mostly writers, historians and philosophers, well-known and appreciated for their personal stature and their contribution to cultural life. They included professors Ben-Zion Dinur, Martin Buber, Joseph Klausner, Fishel Shneurson; the writers Rabbi Benjamin (Redler-Feldman) and Yitzhak Yatziv; Dr. Herzl Landa, Dr. Menachem Landau and Shlomo Zalman Shragai.

This core of active members was surrounded by a small group of sympathizers. They were all intellectuals and did not belong to the *Yishuv* establishment, but they did not share a common party allegiance, and their occupational and social backgrounds were different.

But Al-Domi had one common cause: to deepen the awareness of the *Yishuv* to the Holocaust. Its members averred that the *Yishuv* was indifferent to the fate of its brethren in Europe, not only because of uncontrollable factors, such as distance, difficulties of communication, wartime dangers, or human inability to grasp horrors unprecedented of in human experience. The attitude of the *Yishuv*, claimed Al-Domi, was a result of Zionist ideology. The concentration of efforts and resources, both human and financial, in the building of the national home as a centre and shelter for the Jewish people, diverted attention from the systematic murder of European Jews. Therefore no prominent leader of the *Yishuv* left his post or occupation, and no well-organized and appropriately manned and financed institution was set up in order to undertake a large-scale rescue attempt.

These accusations of Al-Domi were accompanied by a series

of propositions and plans, with a view to uniting and strengthening the efforts, on the assumption that every opportunity should be seized in order to save Jews. The author analyzes Al-Domi, its accusations and suggestions, and the effect it had on public opinion and on the rescue efforts of the *Yishuv*. She also points out the unique contribution of the group to the analysis of the central problems of our age: the role of the individual and of public opinion in institutionalized societies; human values during and after the Holocaust; the Jewish people, Zionism and anti-Semitism in the post-war world.

WEIZMANN'S MAN IN DAMASCUS
DOCUMENTS ON DR. SHLOMO FELMAN'S MISSION TO
FAISAL'S COURT, SEPTEMBER 1919 – JULY 1920

by Nakdimon Rogel

Since 1918, the Zionists entertained the idea of an agreement with the Arabs on the establishment of the Jewish National Home in Palestine in accordance with the Balfour Declaration. The Palestinian Arabs were not considered suitable partners to such an accord; for them, it was thought, only a fair economic accommodation was necessary. It was rather Faisal, the internationally recognized champion of Arab nationalism, that the Zionists looked to, believing he would easily drop all claims to Palestine if his national aspirations were satisfied elsewhere. But the Zionists did not give due weight to the predominance of Palestinian leaders both in Faisal's entourage and in the all-powerful political clubs and organizations of the Pan-Syrian movement.

Disappointed by the failure of the British to provide for permanent and official relations between the Zionist Commission in Palestine and the Damascus regime in the spring of 1919, Dr. Chaim Weizmann tried an independent approach. The task

of establishing an unofficial information and liaison bureau in Damascus was entrusted to Dr. Shlomo Felman, a young Jaffa-born lawyer, who had made Faisal's acquaintance in Paris during the first phase of the Peace Conference.

Dr. Felman stayed in Damascus intermittently from September 1919 to July 1920. His reports throw light on the Zionists' endeavour to reach an overt agreement with Faisal, after Allenby and Clayton had aborted the project to send an official Zionist delegation to Damascus in May 1919. This phase has been largely overlooked by scholars, or else its elements have erroneously been ascribed to the earlier phase.

It seems that in January 1920 a number of prominent members of Faisal's entourage entertained the idea of getting a £3 million loan from the Zionists, which would have given Faisal some leverage in his efforts to overcome the economic and political difficulties which were imperilling his position. Felman and Chaim Kalvarisky, who joined efforts in June 1920 (when the loan idea was revived), were confident that an accord could be reached, but once leaked to the press and criticized in the Syrian Congress, the plan was disavowed by the Palestinian personalities previously involved in the negotiations.

The project was cut short when Faisal was turned out of Damascus at the end of July. With him disappeared the Zionist hope to reach an "entente" with a venerable Arab leader whose signature would commit all Arab nationalists, including those of "Southern Syria".

THE PROVISIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE JEWS OF
PALESTINE AND THE DEFENCE OF UPPER GALILEE
IN THE WINTER OF 1920

by Shulamit Laskov

On 24 February 1920, the Provisional Committee of the Jews of Palestine met in order to discuss the situation of the three Jewish settlements in north-eastern Galilee that were threatened by hostilities between French and Arabs in that area, which the British had evacuated a few months earlier in favour of the French. The meeting was also attended by members of the Zionist Commission, which represented the Zionist Organization in Palestine. It was the first occasion on which a security problem with wide political ramifications was discussed by a body representing the entire new *Yishuv*. The record of this meeting is published here.

From the Jewish point of view the situation was precarious both because of the possibility that the area might be put under permanent French rather than British rule, and – more immediately – because of the doubtful ability of the settlements to hold out against an attack by the Arab irregular forces which were opposing French domination.

The Arabs did not regard the Jews as a party to the dispute, but the settlements were nevertheless being harassed and increasingly felt themselves to be under siege. The settlers, under Yosef Trumpeldor, appealed to the *Yishuv* leadership for help, but little was done.

The problem which faced the Provisional Committee was delicate in the extreme. Understandably, it did not want to get involved in the Arab – French imbroglio, and even if it did decide to take the risk, it was handicapped by the fact that the *Yishuv* did not yet dispose of an organized armed force which could be rushed to the endangered settlements. On the other hand, there was widespread anxiety lest the abandonment of the

settlements would result in the exclusion of the area from the British Mandate over Palestine and consequently from the territory of a future Jewish state. Firm action was nevertheless advocated by the representatives of the workers' movement, including Ben-Gurion and Berl Katznelson, while the non-labour representatives were rather cautious and undecided. Somewhat paradoxically, it was Ze'ev Jabotinsky — future founder and head of the militant Revisionist Movement — who counselled evacuation because he did not believe that the settlements could be effectively defended.

Winding up the debate, Menahem Ussishkin, Chairman of the Zionist Commission, announced that the settlements must be helped, but not before a special commission investigated conditions on the spot.

The commission arrived in the north only after Tel Hai had been attacked and subsequently evacuated. But it was soon resettled and the feared political consequences did not materialize.

תמצית המאמרים באנגלית