ISRAEL

A HISTORY

6 THE YISHUV
SOCIETY, CULTURE, AND ETHOS

In 1922 the poet David Shimonovich published a poem that became a watchword:

Don't listen, my son, to your father's instruction
Nor to your mother's teaching give ear,
For "Line by line" is a father's instruction
And a mother's teaching: "Slow but sure . . . "
And a spring storm speaks the truth:
Listen, man, to the song of the son![1]

This poem, published in Warsaw, epitomizes the youth rebellion that was part of the Zionist experience. Old Judaism seemed aged and ailing, lacking relevance to the new world dawning in the wake of World War One. The old Jew, the Jew of the Diaspora, was depicted as psychologically flawed, physically weak, inclined toward *luftgesheftn* (lit., "air business," meaning peddling, acting as middlemen, and engaging in other ephemeral trades), a stranger to nature and anything natural and spontaneous, materialistic and incapable of acting on anything but his or her own immediate interests. The new Jew was to be the complete opposite: an ethical, aesthetic person guided by ideals who rebels against a debasing reality; a free, proud individual ready to fight for his or her own and the nation's honor. Yearning for freedom and equality among peoples, admiring nature, beauty, and open spaces, the new Jew relinquished the pleasures of a hypocritical, bourgeois world shackled by outdated conventions and sought the challenge of a life in which dedication to the collective was congruent with maintaining inner truth and a life of simplicity, honesty, and self-realization. The new Jew aspired to equality, justice, and truth in human relations, and was prepared to die for them.

This type of thinking is typical of those who dedicate themselves unreservedly to revolutionary or national movements. It represents the transference of the patterns of thinking and behavior characteristic of religious sects to the secular world. Such idealism usually appeals to young people. And indeed the Zionist movement was essentially a youth movement that also attracted adults. The Zionist pioneer, the soldier-volunteer in the struggle for the sake of the nation, was always a young man or woman who devoted his or her life to the uplifting experience of self-sacrifice for a lofty ideal. Shimonovich's poem illustrates the cult of

youth that was part and parcel of this movement. These young men and women detached themselves from existing society in order to establish the society of the future. In such a setting the movement replaces both community and family, and the peer group becomes the significant reference group. The present becomes an avenue leading to the future. Relinquishing material possessions becomes a rite of initiation into the new society. The "divorce" from community, family, and home symbolizes the severing of old loyalties for the sake of a covenant of loyalty to the new society. "O, Mother, know this, that if you see me you will no longer know me. I am with those who walk barefoot in the wilderness. / Poverty here walks with a crown of thistles and a robe and carries a great scepter of gold on the Mediterranean shore!" declared Uri Zvi Greenberg in his poem "The Army of Labor."[2]

The new identity embraced old Jewish patterns while reconfiguring their meaning. Thus poet Avraham Shlonsky sanctifies work on the roads:

> Dress me, good mother, in a glorious robe of many colors
> and at dawn lead me to [my] toil.
> My land is wrapped in light as in a prayer shawl. The houses stand forth like frontlets,
> and the roads paved by hand stream down like phylactery straps.[3]

And Uri Zvi Greenberg speaks of "Jerusalem—phylacteries of the forehead, and the Emek—of the hand!"[4] The new identity created its own diverse texts and symbols: poems, songs, slogans, lifestyles. The new society was founded on truth in human relations; people said what they meant and meant what they said. In this ascetic way of life, poverty and privation endowed people with special value. It was a society that lived at high levels of tension: day after day its members put their loyalty to the test, in both their own eyes and those of their peers. Only young people, whose enthusiasm enables them to undergo a conversion from one culture to another, from one society to another, can live like this.

The conversion from old to new Jew was based on the notion of "negating the Diaspora." This idea came into being with the fathers of Zionism—Pinsker and Herzl—and their belief that as a minority in the Diaspora the Jews were in existential danger, so they needed a homeland. Abraham Mapu, Y. L. Gordon, David Frischmann, and Mendele Mocher Seforim (Sholem Abramovich)—all non-Zionist writers and poets—also built upon these basic ideas. They rejected the Jewish way of life in the Diaspora, continuing the line of criticism leveled against it by all the movements that had sought to modernize the Jewish street since the Enlightenment period. They depicted a degenerated Jewish society and called for productivization, secularization, and education. Berdyczewksi and Brenner added a call for mental and psychological transformation, a "change of values" in the spirit of the Vitalist school of thought, emphasizing earthiness over spir-

ituality, tilling the soil as opposed to living at a remove from nature, manliness as opposed to cowardice.

The more driven the pioneers were by the utopian vision of an alternative society, the more virulent was their criticism of the society they had come from. The harsher the reality of Palestine, and the sacrifices it claimed from them, the greater their need to erect psychological barriers against the desire to go back home. “Home” was still there in Eastern Europe, and families frequently urged their sons or daughters to return to the nest. Avigdor Hameiri’s popular poem “Two Letters” gave lyrical expression to the divided heart. The mother writes,

To my good son in Jerusalem,
Your father is dead, Mother is sick
Come home to the Diaspora.

And the son replies,

Forgive me, my sick mother
I shall never return to the Diaspora
. . . If you really love me, come here and embrace me.

Now comes the Zionist declaration of faith:

I shall no longer be a wanderer!
I shall never budge from here!
I shall not budge, I shall not budge
No!”[5]

The need to repeat the oath of loyalty over and over again actually indicates its weakness.

To maintain the youngsters’ enthusiasm and their loyalty to the enterprise, writers and poets described the small town in Europe as a human, national, and cultural failure, the source of the weaknesses that kept the Jews from attaining Utopia. Perhaps the harshest critics of the Diaspora were Mendele and Brenner, who described with bitter sarcasm all the ills of Jewish society, its dependence on the gentiles, its weakness and wretchedness. The pioneers who came from the Diaspora knew its reality, so their own experience moderated the influence of literature. Not so with those born and educated in Palestine; for them the literary caricature reflected a reality that was entirely different from and inferior to a life of freedom in Palestine. In fact Mendele and Brenner were ambivalent toward the Diaspora, for it represented their own life experience and their people. Despite their harsh criticism of the Jews, in the end they identified with them and loved them. Those born in Palestine, on the other hand, took in the criticism without the love that mitigated it.

The pioneer was the model used to indoctrinate the youth movements founded in Eastern Europe between the two World Wars. This ideal figure served as a tool for recruiting idealistic human resources for the Zionist movement. The figure of the pioneer was drawn from two sources of inspiration. The Russian Narodnik, the revolutionary who left family and home behind and pursued a life of total dedication and sacrifice for the revolution, was the inspiration for pioneering as a way of life—not a daring onetime act, but a lifelong commitment. The second source was apparently Hasidism, through which bubbled springs of enthusiasm, willingness to give up the material world, and dedication to the community of believers. Other sources of inspiration included the Polish national movement, which influenced education in Betar. The difference between the Betar pioneer and the pioneer from the leftist movements lay in the final aim of their indoctrination. Whereas the Betar member was instructed to fulfill any mission required for the realization of Zionism, especially military ones, leftist youth movements directed members toward agricultural settlement, preferably on the border, in the form of kibbutz life. The settlement ethos was potent, for it presented the young person with a concrete mission whose importance was never in doubt and did not wane with time. The power of this ethos is evident in the fact that nonsocialist movements such as Hapo'el Hamizrachi also espoused kibbutz settlement for their members. Labor on the borders became the leading Zionist-pioneering ethos of the time; even Betar was affected by it and attempted to establish labor brigades in the moshavot.

The cult of youth was an inseparable part of the notion of the new Jew. The adults, in Palestine and the Diaspora alike, were considered "the generation of the wilderness," who would not live to see the Promised Land, i.e., the realization of Zionism. The young people who grew up in freedom would be the ones to bring redemption. In his poem "Creed," Shaul Tschernichovsky lauds the future generation in Palestine:

> Then my people will blossom once more,
> And in the land a new generation will rise
> Its iron chains will be removed,
> Eye to eye it will see light.
>
> It will live, love, and strive,
> A generation in The Land is indeed alive,
> Not in the future, in the sky—
> Living in the spirit is not enough.[6]

This generation was envisioned as possessing healthy instincts, passion, sensuality, and a talent for living. The direct link between the country and the young

people who were educated in it would bring about the rebirth of the Jewish people as a courageous nation, connected with nature and rejecting the excessive spirituality of the Diaspora. In this cult of youth a special place was reserved for those born and brought up in Palestine. Whereas their fathers had struggled to get used to physical labor, the sons worked in the fields with no difficulty. While the older generation spoke of their love of the country but barely knew it, their children tramped its length and breadth and identified with its climate and landscape. They did not yearn for a different home and landscape, nor did they suffer from what poet Leah Goldberg called "the heartache of two homelands."[7]

The older generation spoke much of the need for self-defense and bearing arms, but very few actually did so. In contrast, Yitzhak Tabenkin, the leader of the Hakibbutz Hameuhad movement, described the young pioneer as a man carrying a hoe in one hand and a rifle on his shoulder, uniting the tiller of the soil with the fighter-defender. "Your boys once brought you peace with the plow. Today they bring you peace with the rifle!" as Nathan Alterman put it in a song of the late 1930s that was sung by the members of the Haganah. The *sabra*, the desert cactus encountered by the immigrants, gave its name to this generation: its prickly pear has a thorny outer skin but flesh that is sweet and juicy. The sabras were said to be frank and direct, honest and brave, free of the hypocritical mannerisms of bourgeois society, with strength that lay not in words but in deeds. Thus did the settlers idealize the native sons, who to their parents seemed to epitomize all the dreams of free children of nature growing up in Palestine. A young American woman student who encountered this breed of sabra defined them as follows: "Rugged and unpolished, unsophisticated, uninhibited, often shy, uncomplicated, direct, gentle, ruthless, undaunted, self-reliant, with a gift for improvisation."[8]

COLLECTIVE VERSUS INDIVIDUAL

A mixture of admiration, anxiety, rivalry, and identification characterized the Yishuv's attitude toward Soviet Russia. The Bolshevik Revolution inspired tremendous enthusiasm. Intellectuals all over the world saw it as the opening of a new, lofty chapter in human history. "There is no political movement anywhere to which masses of mankind, in their millions, looked with such messianic yearning as they did to the Russian Revolution . . . ," wrote Berl Katznelson. "People did not fully comprehend the nature of the [new] regime; they did not judge it on its merits or faults. They so sorely wished to see the old regime shatter that everybody sought to accept the good and refused to acknowledge the evil. That was the beginning."[9]

The experience of a revolution that razed an old world to the ground captivated young people. The pioneers of Palestine longed for the shortcut discussed earlier: building an egalitarian society and economy from scratch in Palestine, just

as people had in Russia. The pioneers were less influenced by communist ideology than attracted by the fact that in that vast country a social experiment was taking place similar in character to the one occurring in Palestine, albeit on a different scale. From a distance the surge in construction, the industrialization and electrification, the organizational boldness, eradication of illiteracy, and advances by women and children, all seemed in line with the pioneers' own desires. The communist regime, which swore by the abolition of all forms of discrimination and had promoted Jews to senior positions, tugged at the very sensitive heartstrings of Jews all over the world. When the pioneers of Palestine sang, "Our faces to the rising sun, / Our path again turns eastward. / We look ahead to the great hour, / Heads held high, our soul unbowed," they had in mind both the Zionist and socialist visions.[10]

The pioneers saw themselves as part of the revolutionary movement and expected the Soviet Union to extend a supportive hand. The problem was that in 1920 the Comintern (Communist International) had declared Zionism reactionary, considering it an ally of British imperialism against the Arab masses who were carrying progress forward in the Middle East. Since then the history of the left in Palestine (and later the Israeli left) has been marked by many attempts to explain Zionism to the Soviets and prove its justness to them. Relations between the pioneers and "the world of the revolution" were not severed by the Soviets' rejection. Many Jews who came from Russia and knew its language loved Russian culture. But even those who did not know the language sought contact with the society of the future. Films, journals, and books in Russian and in translation nurtured the myth of the wonderland where a society without exploiters and exploited was being built. Hashomer Hatzaʿir posters in Palestine copied the style of *Ogonyok*, an illustrated weekly full of Soviet images. "Socialist realism" became the accepted style of many writers of the generation that came of age in 1948. Youth movement members enthusiastically sang patriotic Russian songs in Hebrew translation. Berl Katznelson cautioned that the Cossack cavalry they were singing about had perpetrated pogroms against the Jews, but in vain; the enthusiasm did not falter.

Two publishing houses established by kibbutz movements (Sifriat Hapoalim, by Hashomer Hatzaʿir, and Hakibbutz Hameuhad, by Hakibbutz Hameuhad) translated both popular literature and Russian writings on Marxism-Leninism into Hebrew (literature the younger generation hardly read). In 1942 Sifriat Hapoalim published *Russian Poetry*, an anthology of the best modern Russian poetry, translated into Hebrew by some of the leading poets in Palestine. Nobody noticed that very few Soviet-period poems were found worthy of inclusion. Novels such as Anton Semyonovich Makarenko's *The Pedagogical Poem* (translated by the poet Avraham Shlonsky, a pioneer of modernism in Hebrew poetry), describ-

ing the educational experience of abandoned children, and Valentin Petrovich Kataev's *A White Sail Gleams*, about the 1905 revolution, became best sellers in Palestine.[11] Books about World War Two inspired admiration for the heroism of the Russian people in their fight against the Nazis. In the knapsack of every Palmach soldier was a copy of Alexander Bek's *Panfilov's Men*, which described the heroism of a Red Army unit in defending Moscow.[12] There was no similarity between the values this book inculcated and the values of the Palmach (for example, in the novel a deserter is executed in front of his company; no one in the Palmach would have dreamt of such an act), but that did not prevent psychological identification with them. The image of the partisan, a fighter with no need of rank or uniform, a commander who treated his men as equals, was extremely potent in shaping Palmach norms. It was in line with the perception of genuineness and sincerity in relationships, in contrast with the buttoned-up formality of a regular army, which was considered an expression of militarism.

The Zionist call for the "generation of the wilderness" to defer gratification for the sake of future generations may seem reminiscent of the Soviet mentality that did not hesitate to sacrifice two generations for the revolution. The essential difference, however, was that the society in Palestine was founded on free will; anyone who did not want to embrace the directives of the collective was exempt from them. In Russia such people found themselves in godforsaken exile. In Palestine they went to live in Tel Aviv.

During the 1920s the Soviet Union presented what appeared to be an alternative to Zionism. The authorities initiated an agricultural settlement plan in the Crimea for hundreds of thousands of Jews who had become impoverished due to the erosion of the middle classes in Russia. Its second stage involved a plan to establish an autonomous Jewish region in Birobidzhan in Central Asia. Both these possibilities sparked the imagination of Jewish activists throughout the world, since not only did they offer an existential solution for hundreds of thousands of Jews, they also amounted to Soviet recognition of a Jewish nation. British author Israel Zangwill, one of Herzl's first supporters, who had become a territorialist following the Uganda controversy but returned to Zionism after the Balfour Declaration, enthused over the broad scope of the Soviet plans. Palestine, he contended, was as small as Wales and would be unable to provide a solution for the needs of millions of Jews. The Joint invested millions of dollars in Jewish settlement in the USSR, while the Zionist Organization could only look on enviously. The enthusiasm generated by the Jewish rehabilitation plan in the USSR attracted pioneers from among both the Gedud Haʿavoda and Jewish American communists. The lucky ones eventually managed to get out alive, but most perished in the Holocaust, in the Stalinist purges, or from the privations of the remote locations they were sent to. Since the local inhabitants opposed Jews

being settled among them, and the Jews themselves preferred to rebuild their lives in Russia's big cities, these projects produced no lasting results. But in the 1920s they seemed to present an ideological and practical alternative to Zionism.

It is customary to describe Yishuv society as one whose prevailing ethos was collectivist, requiring people to relinquish their individual personalities for the benefit of the great national objectives. And indeed, unlike the accepted norms of today's individualistic Western society, the power of the collective was greater than that of the individual. Yet like any generalization, this one is too simplistic. Although the goal of the national movement was to save all Jews, in order to motivate people to action it had to present a vision of personal redemption. Throughout the entire period, therefore, there was tension between individual aspirations to redemption and the demand that each person accept the collective's directives.

The people of the Second Aliya were extremely individualistic. They immigrated to Palestine alone, without support from an organization, and found their way in the country as individuals. The ideologies and methods of operating they formulated were original, derived mainly from their experience in Palestine. The works of young people who rediscovered their Jewish identity there, such as poet Rachel Bluwstein or writer Zvi Schatz (Trumpeldor's comrade in arms), reveal a strong emphasis on the individual—his or her desires, anguish, and soul searching. The literature translated into Hebrew on the initiative of people of the Second Aliya is literature of the individual—for example, the poetry of Mikhail Lermontov, Gerhart Hauptmann's stories, and Fyodor Dostoevsky's novels. The great diversity of cultural trends during the Second Aliya period indicates an openness to the world of the individual.

In the 1920s, under the influence of the Bolshevik Revolution, the star of the collective rose. Among the people of the Third Aliya, especially in the Gedud Haʿavoda, there were collectivist tendencies. The aliya's members immigrated to Palestine as part of groups that later joined centralist organizations that emphasized the authority of the community over the individual. Members of Hashomer Hatzaʿir immigrated to Palestine as disciples of Freud and Gustav Landauer, fervent individualists who sought personal redemption. But once in Palestine they organized themselves into a Marxist movement that accepted "ideological collectivism"—meaning that after stormy ideological debates, the position of the movement's historical leadership (Yaʿakov Hazan and Meir Yaʿari) was usually accepted. Groups of immigrants from Hechalutz and Betar, and people from the labor youth movements of Palestine in the 1930s, cultivated dedication to the community and subordination of the individual's desires to the will of "the movement." Members of the Yishuv's underground and paramilitary organizations accepted the authority of the collective in the form of an unbreakable rule:

"We have all been drafted for life, / Only death will discharge us from the ranks," as Avraham Stern put it in the Lehi anthem he composed.

Clearly, then, there were idealistic minorities who accepted what was known at the time as "the movement's decision." For a movement that had taken upon itself the task of building a nation, the existence of such minorities was vital. The question is to what extent these norms were prevalent among the general public, and whether the collective possessed the power to compel individuals to accept its discipline. Public intellectuals, propagandists, and educators all glorified those who accepted the yoke of the collective, although with reservations. For example, the subject of "elevation of Man" and the importance of the individual was central for the youth movements of Palestine. Literature, even that produced by the 1948 generation, was ambivalent about collectivism. The protagonists of stories about the kibbutz—*Ma'agalot* (Circles) by David Maletz, *Efraim hozer la'aspeset* (Ephraim goes back to the alfalfa) by S. Yizhar, and *Haderasha* (The sermon) by Haim Hazaz—were all extraordinary individualists who rebelled against accepted norms.[13] Even Moshe Shamir's emblematic novel *Hu halakh basadot* (He walked in the fields), considered to express the collectivist ethos, creates a confrontation between the aspiration of Mika, the female protagonist, to individual happiness and the commitment of the male protagonist, Uri, to the collective.

People at the time were aware of the tension between individual and collective. They perceived themselves not as subject to an unavoidable authority but rather as having a choice. The intelligentsia who identified with the labor movement maintained their individualist ideal, and gave expression to it in their work. A good example is Nathan Alterman, author of both "The Seventh Column" (a title referring to both his weekly newspaper column and a book of poetry collected from the column)—political poetry in the full sense of the word that contributed to shaping the collective ethos—and *Kokhavim bahutz* (Stars outside), a book of lyrical individualist love poetry. The popularity of Alterman's poetry among young people demonstrates their profound identification with individual experiences and personal expression.

Although public and political discourse created the impression that the authority of the collective ethos was universally accepted, behind this public image lay individualist tendencies that did not accept "the movement's decision." The people on "the mountain"—Mount Scopus, home of the Hebrew University—did not abide by the ethos of the Emek. The dropout rate in the youth movements even before members reached a kibbutz was staggering. After their arrival in the country, many members of Hechalutz decided to look for work in Tel Aviv instead of going to a rural community. Then not everyone who went to a kibbutz remained to live in it. Every time the Yishuv authorities called for a mass volun-

teer effort—enlistment in the British Army, payment to Kofer Hayishuv (a fund to finance security needs) or Magbit Hagiyus Vehahatzala (an appeal for funds for the Yishuv war effort in 1942)—it was very difficult to get people to accept the community's decisions without coercion. The picture painted of a Yishuv that voluntarily accepted the community's decisions thus appears overblown and simplistic, omitting the variegated shades in the Yishuv mosaic. Recall too that until the 1950s, the pendulum between the good of the individual and that of the nation was swinging toward the national interest all over the world. At a time when nations were fighting for their very existence, as in World War Two, personal interests were relegated to second place everywhere.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A DISTINCTIVE YISHUV CULTURE

Yishuv society is also usually depicted as extolling manual labor and the simple worker and being contemptuous of the intellectual. Artists, writers, and poets who were members of Gedud Haʿavoda said they felt that they had to conceal their intellectual "weaknesses" lest they be mocked or lose their standing. But although some people reported feeling this way, it is doubtful that their personal experience was true in general. The Yishuv inherited the esteem of both Jewish and Russian tradition for the writer and poet. Ever since the Second Aliya, as much as the Yishuv extolled the manual laborer, it also held the intellectual in high regard. Yosef Haim Brenner lived in the Gedud Haʿavoda camp at Migdal and was deeply admired, even though most of his comrades—to whom he taught Hebrew—could not read his stories. Uri Zvi Greenberg, who had immigrated to Palestine in 1924, received an enthusiastic welcome, and his volume of poems, *A Great Fear and the Moon*, was published the following year. The two workers' parties, Ahdut Haʿavoda and Hapoʿel Hatzaʿir, competed in publishing literary journals. Considering the financial difficulties this enterprise involved, it amply demonstrates the importance accorded cultural life.

In the 1920s the center of Hebrew culture moved from Russia to Palestine. S. Y. Agnon, Ahad Haʿam, and above all Chaim Nachman Bialik all settled in Palestine and gained both reknown and a large number of admirers. In 1925 Berl Katznelson began publishing the Histadrut daily newspaper *Davar* and invited the Yishuv intelligentsia to contribute. Another example of the importance accorded the intelligentsia is the special relationship between the labor movement and the Hebrew University. Many members of Brit Shalom (see chapter 3) were on the university faculty. As the struggle between Arabs and Jews intensified, their position as a peace alliance became increasingly marginal. The contrast between the position of the Brit Shalom lecturers and that of the students was particularly acute. Nevertheless the dialogue between Brit Shalom and the labor movement leadership

continued throughout this period. The former were considered worthy interlocutors who should not be excluded from the Zionist movement, even when their opinions ran counter to the position of the Jewish Agency Executive.

The importance of cultural heroes in shaping Yishuv society cannot be overstated. Brenner and Gordon became the paragons of the labor movement; the youth movements used their works to educate members. Bialik, the national poet, enjoyed free rein to criticize every event that took place among Jews and in the Yishuv. Writers such as Uri Zvi Greenberg, Avraham Shlonsky, Eliezer Steinman, Alexander Penn, and after them Nathan Alterman, Yonatan Ratosh, S. Yizhar, and the writers and poets of the 1948 generation gained special status in the Yishuv, much like the place of intellectuals in Russian or French society. On the Revisionist right, Uri Zvi Greenberg wore the mantle of poet-prophet who foresaw the future. In the 1940s Alterman's "The Seventh Column," which expressed the spirit of the Yishuv and its aspirations, was considered the most authentic voice of the period. Alterman did not hesitate to speak in the voice of humanistic morality in assailing the acts and errors of left and right, but he gained true fame in the Yishuv for his vehement, powerful criticism of British policy.

The labor movement extolled what it called "the cultured worker"—a worker who was also a consumer of culture—and made efforts to close the gap between intellectuals and manual workers. While this mission was never accomplished, the intention behind it refutes the claim that there were anti-intellectual trends within the movement. The public libraries of the workers' councils had a wide readership who sought out Hebrew books. Their culture rooms were populated by newspaper and magazine readers. The descriptions of philharmonic orchestra concerts at the Harod Spring and the promotion of choirs and other musical activities in the kibbutzim demonstrate the yearning for beauty and cultural experience that persisted even under conditions of material hardship. The publicity given all these cultural resources demonstrates their importance in the eyes of the leadership. Herzl had depicted the excessive numbers of Jewish intellectuals as one cause of antisemitism. But even while in theory the new Jew was supposed to shed the excessive spirituality attributed to the Jewish intellectual (as opposed to workers, who made their living through physical labor), the rich spiritual life that developed in the small Yishuv and turned it into the center of Hebrew culture, shows that on this issue, too, a great distance separates the hackneyed notions from reality.

The model pioneer bearing his hoe and rifle had another attribute: he spoke Hebrew. At the training farms in the Diaspora, those who knew Hebrew got priority in immigrating. This policy shows the great importance attributed to the language and the culture deriving from it in the shaping of the nation, following

European nationalist tradition in which a nation's language was a substantive symbol of its existence as a national entity. The "language war" that broke out toward the end of the Second Aliya period ensured the dominance of Hebrew in both the secular and Mizrachi educational institutions in Palestine. Only the ultra-Orthodox used Yiddish as their language of instruction. During the Mandate period Yishuv representatives called for Hebrew to be recognized as an official language, together with Arabic and English, and to a great degree they succeeded. The status of Hebrew was recognized symbolically in the name of the country, which was known as Palestine–Eretz Yisrael—a sort of compromise between the Jews' demands that the country's historical Jewish heritage be recognized and fierce Arab opposition to this.

Though the Yishuv became the world center of Hebrew culture in the 1920s, that did not ensure the dominance of Hebrew as the spoken language. Each wave of immigration brought with it the immigrants' native tongues. The quintessential Jewish language was Yiddish, the beloved mother tongue of all the champions of Hebrew. After the 1908 Czernowitz Yiddish Language Conference, and mainly from the 1920s onward, Yiddish and Hebrew competed for the Jews' hearts and minds. As belles lettres flourished in Hebrew, the same sort of literature appeared in Yiddish. Thus as Hebrew literature was being "demoted" from sacred to secular, Yiddish "ascended" from a vernacular to a language of high culture. The socialist Bund and Volkist movements that fought for Jewish autonomy in Eastern Europe presented Yiddish as the language of the Jewish masses and Hebrew as the reactionary sacred language of an educated Jewish elite detached from the lives of ordinary people. After the Bolshevik Revolution the Communist Party created the Yevsektsia (Jewish section), which was responsible for Jewish culture in Russia. Identifying Hebrew with Zionism, it acted to suppress both, banning them in the USSR.

The Zionist movement, however, did not ban Yiddish. Hechalutz conducted its activities in Poland mainly in that language, since most candidates for immigration knew no Hebrew. Ben-Gurion, a sworn Hebraist who used the language even before he immigrated to Palestine, spoke Yiddish at election rallies in Poland. He did the same when he toured the DP camps in Germany after World War Two. But as long as the non-Zionist left associated Yiddish with the political rejection of Zionism, setting it up as a challenger to Hebrew, the two Jewish languages appeared to be in competition.

In Palestine the passion for guaranteeing Hebrew's dominance as a spoken language increased with the onset of mass immigration. The Legion of the Defenders of the Language was formed in Tel Aviv; its members would admonish people they found conversing in Yiddish in public. This happened to Bialik, who liked to chat in Yiddish instead of Hebrew, which he said did not roll off his

tongue. In the 1930s the Hebrew-language zealots faced another issue: most of the immigrants from Germany spoke only German and displayed little talent for learning Hebrew. The zealots contended that the Germans should not speak the Nazis' language in the street. This uncalled-for fanaticism only made the immigrants' new life more difficult.

The younger generation did learn Hebrew and was relatively fluent in it, showing that other languages had only a temporary hold on the population. Tel Aviv, the arena in which the needless zealotry occurred, displayed tolerance toward foreign languages in one noteworthy area—street names. Despite being known as "the first Hebrew city," Tel Aviv commemorated Zionism's founding fathers, its writers and poets, and important Jews in history, without being fazed by their non-Hebrew names. In the end the Yiddish-Hebrew debate dissipated with the annihilation of millions of Jews—the Yiddish speakers—in Eastern Europe. In the USSR Yiddish culture was destroyed in the late 1940s, together with its proponents, while in the United States it simply disappeared with the passing of the older generations.

Promoting the pioneer as the ideal type of the labor movement was part of a multifaceted attempt to shape Palestine society into an alternative to bourgeois society. The seeds of this utopian society were the labor settlements where the lifestyle perfectly matched the ideal. But most workers in Palestine lived in the cities and identified only partly with labor ideology. They were attracted to the bourgeois lifestyle, the temptations of the city, and its hedonism. Yet their allegiance to the labor movement and acceptance of its ideology as the foundation for building the country were all vital for a movement that sought to consolidate its political hegemony through mass support.

Socialization of the workers and their families in the spirit of the dominant ethos was carried out both directly and indirectly. They were invited to take Hebrew lessons and evening classes for adults and working youth, to broaden their education. The daily paper *Davar* was designed to bring the Zionist-left worldview into every home. The 1930s saw the publication of *Davar Liyeladim* (children's *Davar*), a high-quality weekly intended to educate a generation of young readers. Every now and then *Davar* published books relevant to the Zionist-socialist worldview, which the paper distributed at a discount to subscriber households. In the early 1940s the development of indoctrination through printed materials was completed with the establishment of the Am Oved (working people) publishing house. In contrast with the publishing arms of Hashomer Hatzaʿir and Hakibbutz Hameuhad, whose dominant objectives were Marxist indoctrination and cultivating a sympathetic attitude toward the USSR, Am Oved nurtured its readers' literary tastes while emphasizing Jewish subjects and identification with the Jewish people. In 1928 the Habima theater arrived from Russia and built a new home in

Tel Aviv. Despite the general admiration of Habima, the Histadrut founded the Ha'ohel theater, which it defined as a workers' theater, part of the alternative society. The Hapo'el sports association stressed the distinction between the workers' and the middle class sports association, Maccabi. In its early years Hapo'el did not encourage competitive sports but focused above all on popular sports. Over the years the differences between the two associations blurred, but Hapo'el retained the loyalty of its leftist members, who identified with its red-shirted teams at soccer games, a clear class symbol.

In addition to services such as its sick fund and labor exchange, the Histadrut built "workers' housing"—pleasant, well-planned neighborhoods with large green spaces separating the buildings. It also built schools for workers' children, whose educational practice promoted the importance of manual labor by having students work in the vegetable garden and with livestock and taught labor movement values. These housing developments and schools served mainly the families of officials and permanent workers—the working class elite. Poor workers could not afford workers' housing and usually sent their children to the schools of the general education system. But the attempt to create a workers' community where the workers lived close to one another and assimilated the same manners and behavioral norms was of cardinal importance in forming their self-awareness as bearers of a different culture.

This culture had its own character and symbols. Clothing fashions highlighted proletarian reserve: the simple blue cotton shirt worn by youth movement members ("The blue shirt surpasses any jewelry," they sang); the side-buttoned Russian shirt worn on festive occasions, such as the Sabbath eve; the young women's *sarafan* (pinafore dress) and long braids; the Palmach fighter's khaki shorts; the kibbutznik's *tembel* beanie; and the city worker's peaked cap. Leisure activity usually included dancing on Sabbath eve. The kibbutzim and youth movements preferred circle dances that demanded no special skill and allowed single people to join in. The hora circles whirled at a dizzying pace to the sound of hasidic tunes, highlighting the connection between religious and secular ecstasy. Couple dances to Russian melodies were given a seal of approval since they were "folk dances" that ostensibly resurrected authentic popular culture from oblivion, in the spirit of reinventing the tradition of European nationalist movements. Sing-alongs lasting hours created a sense of belonging to the community and sharing common values. Here too the emphasis was on equality; the choir took precedence over self-important soloists. Festival ceremonies were designed to include as many children as possible in the performance. This practice gave rise to the "pageant," a reading of texts in sequence that did not require either acting or vocal talent. One of the most popular selections was Yitzhak Lamdan's poem "Masada," describing the refugees fleeing the 1920 pogroms in Ukraine

for Palestine, while resisting the seduction of the Red enchantment. "Open your gate, Masada, and I, the refugee, shall enter!" declares Lamdan, for whom Masada symbolized reborn Palestine, not destruction. He calls out: "Rise, fire of the dance! / Masada shall not fall again!"[14]

The Jewish calendar provided ample opportunity for applying religious symbols to the secular world and adapting them to the needs of labor settlement. Thus the Sukkot (Tabernacles), Passover, and Shavuot (Pentecost) holidays became agricultural festivals. Every kibbutz worthy of the name had its own *bikurim* ceremony (the harvesting of the first fruits), with a procession displaying all the kibbutz's achievements in agricultural produce and livestock, plus the latest farm machinery. These festivals engendered music and dance traditions. The walls of the dining hall were decorated according to the members' artistic talents. The Passover Seder was a great festive celebration held in the dining hall, at tables covered with white cloths, with the traditional Passover Haggadah replaced by a locally written version reflecting the spirit of the time and its problems and including readings of literary excerpts and singing.

However, this heroic attempt to establish the alternative society and invent for it suitable cultural patterns never overcame the seductive power of bourgeois modernity. The norms of the petite bourgeoisie lived and flourished together with those of the workers. In Tel Aviv, the center of bourgeois society, immigrants from Poland built a plethora of "dream homes" during the 1920s. These houses were intended to combine the architectures of East and West but were actually an odd and extraordinary collection of eclectic styles that expressed the Tel Aviv bourgeoisie's aspirations for a life of comfort and luxury. Certain areas of Tel Aviv were built during the 1930s in the Bauhaus style, with spacious apartments boasting the latest architectural innovations.

Ever since the first Tel Aviv kiosk was constructed at the time of the Second Aliya, that city displayed a clear tendency toward hedonism and joie de vivre. As early as the 1920s, and even more so in the 1930s, the shop windows along the main thoroughfares displayed the latest Paris fashions. The cafés and restaurants were crowded. Cultural and political elites preferred meeting in the bourgeois cafés rather than the workers' kitchens or the modest cultural centers. The Tel Aviv boardwalk was lined with cafés where orchestras played, so that diners could dance ballroom dances like the tango and waltz in the best European tradition. The stark contrast between the ascetic lifestyle of labor settlement and the city's open hedonism aroused sharp criticism of Tel Aviv, whose very existence was a constant temptation for the pioneers who had to forgo the pleasures of life in order to build the nation. Very few city workers could resist the attraction of bourgeois glamour.

Tel Aviv's leisure culture attracted the middle and working classes alike. The

masses went to the beach, which suited their wishes and the size of their pockets. Billboards invited the public to cultural events, from the Oneg Shabbat (lit., Sabbath joy, reception of the Sabbath) evenings led by Bialik as an expression of the high Hebrew culture the intelligentsia sought to nurture, to the satirical theaters, such as the Kumkum and the Matateh. The most popular form of entertainment was the cinema, even though the proponents of high culture sermonized against it as an empty, escapist medium. The Adloyada processions accompanying the Purim festival (the name is derived from the rabbinic saying that one should revel on Purim until one "no longer knows"—*ad delo yada*) were an example of the light, entertaining culture that characterized Tel Aviv and attracted thousands. During the festival the streets were crowded with visitors from all over the country, including labor settlements, who came to enjoy the costumes and the carnival atmosphere. Even the Arab neighbors from Jaffa liked to walk among the happy throng.

The Orient Fair, which first opened in 1932, provided an opportunity to exhibit the country's industrial and agricultural achievements. All the leading dignitaries attended the opening. Tel Aviv showcased itself as the economic and manufacturing heart of Palestine, no less important than labor settlement. A young American student who came to Palestine in October 1947 was more impressed, however, by the differences between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, where she lived: "Tel Aviv is a far cry from provincial Jerusalem, very sophisticated and cosmopolitan with a slight Hebrew accent." The city reminded her of Coney Island: "It has a carnival air about it: big signs, blaring noises, laughing faces, boisterous children and flamboyant colors."[15]

Tel Aviv was also where large-scale events were held. The city's halls were small and stifling, and in the Mediterranean climate, the outdoors had greater appeal for a sort of street theater. Open-air political rallies went on for hours, with audiences standing as they listened eagerly to the speakers. Heat, sweat, and crowds did not bother the hundreds and thousands of supporters. In the pre-television era the political rally was the most direct form of contact between the public and its leaders. Attendance at these events demonstrated solidarity with the organizers, plus a willingness to enlist in the cause for a few hours by addressing political issues. Such a rally was both political statement and source of entertainment, for the political leaders were first-rate orators who knew how to capture an audience.

May Day was the occasion for mass demonstrations by the Histadrut and the parties of the left. The Histadrut leadership, trade unions, workplaces (especially those belonging to the *hevrat ha'ovdim*, or society of workers), kibbutzim, and youth movements all made sure their members attended. Red flags were waved and rousing speeches delivered, after which the public quietly dispersed. On Tel

Hai Day (eleventh of the Hebrew month of Adar), commemorating Trumpeldor and his comrades who fell defending Tel Hai in 1920, the youth movements marched through the city streets, with those in brown Betar uniforms marching separately from the wearers of blue shirts. Whereas May Day symbolized solidarity with the workers' movement worldwide, Tel Hai Day symbolized the Zionist struggle for Palestine. Betar emphasized the myth of Trumpeldor the fighter, who as he lay dying whispered, "Never mind, it is good to die for our country." Those in blue shirts focused on Trumpeldor the pioneer worker, the man who plowed his soil. The slogan "What we have built must not be abandoned," coined by one of the Tel Hai fallen, became central to the labor movement ethos.

The Hanukkah torchlight processions by the youth movements reflected the way this holiday had been transformed. The traditional festival of the small jug of oil was now a festival of heroism. The heroism of the Maccabees had inspired the founding fathers of Zionism and their dream of transforming the image of the Jews. "The Maccabees will rise again," Herzl declares.[16] When Bialik wanted to underscore the wretchedness of the Jews during the Kishinev pogrom, he compared their cowardice with the heroism of their Maccabean ancestors. And in his poem "They Say There Is a Land," Tschernichovsky declares, "You are the Maccabee!"[17]

A miracle did *not* happen to us,
We found no cruse of oil
We cut through rock till we bled
And there was light!

Thus sang the youngsters of Zionist activism, setting themselves in opposition to those who believed in miraculous redemption.[18] The traditional Hanukkah spinning top and pancakes remained popular, but the holiday as a whole acquired a layer of public meaning designed to demonstrate the historical tradition of heroism in the Holy Land.

Large national funerals were also held in Tel Aviv. This tradition began with the funerals of the people killed in the 1921 riots, who included the venerated writer Yosef Haim Brenner. It was renewed with the funeral of Chaim Arlosoroff, the murdered head of the Jewish Agency Political Department (1933), and continued with the funerals of Bialik, Tel Aviv mayor Meir Dizengoff, Berl Katznelson, and many more. Cultural heroes were given mass funerals as a mark of respect for the deceased and what they stood for. The funerals for riot victims provided an opportunity to express solidarity and loyalty either to labor or to the right. The mass demonstrations against the Mandatory government had a similar purpose. Particularly noteworthy were the demonstrations protesting the White Paper in 1939, and those after the World War demanding that the gates of Palestine be opened, using the slogan "Free Immigration, A Jewish State."

The education system worked to inculcate in the younger generation a commitment to the Zionist idea. Every Friday children came to school with a donation to the Jewish National Fund, which they put in the JNF Blue Box. The class that collected the most money won a commendation, with songs in the accompanying ceremony stressing the importance of these contributions for redeeming the land. One lesson taught in primary school classes was "Homeland," which covered the country's geography, climate, and flora. A map of Palestine appeared on the first page of the exercise book, in which children wrote the songs about Palestine learned that year. Children's books emphasized the connection with the country. "Our Land, You Are Beautiful" was the title of one popular book. Textbooks were full of such terms as "homeland" and "our land." "As the sun blazes on the mountain, / And while the valley's dew still glistens. / We love you, our homeland, / With joy, with song, with labor," the children sang. "From the slopes of Lebanon to the Dead Sea / We will plow your fields. / Plant, farm and build for you, / So that you will be beautiful." Nobody questioned this song's personification of the land itself rather than the nation.[19] A tree-planting festival was held on the fifteenth of the Hebrew month of Shevat. According to the Zionist narrative, the Arabs had destroyed the country's forests, causing soil erosion. Now the Jews had come to restore Palestine to its former beauty as a land flowing with milk and honey, so trees must be planted. The tree-planting ceremony, done by kindergarten and primary school children, encouraged them to identify with the slogan of making the desert bloom.

Schools and youth movements took field trips to historic sites such as the graves of the Maccabees at Modi'in, Masada, and Tel Hai. Every trip included explanations of the historical contexts. The songs participants sang as they went along, the texts read at the sites, the physical exertion of the walks, peer-group identification, and the sense of togetherness and belonging all coalesced to help anchor love of the country, its landscapes, and its history deeply in the adolescents' psyches. This identification with the physical land, its heat and dust and mountain springs, was unique to the children born and raised in Palestine. Their parents' generation did not know it. They acquired the feeling of being masters of the country from Jewish history and Zionist ideology, and their love of it was not free of longing for other landscapes. For native-born children, being masters of the land was self-evident. It was their homeland—they knew no other. If on their field trips they encountered Arab villages, they perceived these as part of the scenery—perhaps as a cause of some tension and a sense of danger that heightened the excitement of the trip but not as representing another claimant to ownership of the country.

Had a survey about the Zionist ethos been conducted among the people of the Yishuv after World War Two, we can assume that the majority would have recited

the standard slogans about "inverting the pyramid" and establishing a workers' class in Palestine, the importance of the pioneer, the wonders of the country's youth, the malice of the British, and the backwardness of the Arabs. They would probably have condemned the employers of Arab labor and demanded free immigration to Palestine. If asked whether they were willing to dedicate their time and their lives to achieve national objectives, a high percentage would have declared themselves ready and willing. We can also assume that they would have expressed faith in the Zionist leadership headed by David Ben-Gurion and shown themselves ready to follow him. On the face of it, this survey would have shown the predominance of Zionist-socialist ideology in its moderate Mapai form. On the conscious level of public discourse, propaganda, and education, this was a consensual worldview, accepted also by the center and even the right. To what degree this worldview was a guiding light in everyday life is another question entirely.

NOTES

1. David Shimonovitz, "Mered haben" (Rebellion of the Son), first published in the Hashomer Hatza'ir magazine in Warsaw, 1922. Reprinted, inter alia, in *Songbook*, Tel Aviv: Yakhdav, 1965, p. 76.

2. Uri Zvi Greenberg, "Tzvah ha'avoda" (The Army of Labor), *Be'emtza ha'olam uve'emtza hazmanim* (In the Middle of the World, In the Middle of Time), Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1979, p. 32.

3. Avraham Shlonsky, "Amal" (Labor), *Poems*, Merhavia: Hapoalim Publishing, 1965, p. 165.

4. Uri Zvi Greenberg, "Hizdaharut" (Illumination), *Be'emtza ha'olam uve'emtza hazmanim* (In the Middle of the World, In the Middle of Time), Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1979, p. 52.

5. Avigdor Hameiri, "Shnei mikhtavim" (Two Letters), popular song.

6. Shaul Tschernichovsky, "Ani ma'amin" (Creed), *Kol kitvei Shaul Tschernichovsky* (Collected Works), vol. 1, Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1990: Poems and Ballads, pp. 27–28.

7. Leah Goldberg, "Oren" (Pine), *Barak baboker* (Morning Lightning), Merhavia: Sifriat Hapoalim, 1957, p. 39.

8. Porath, *Letters from Jerusalem*, p. 51.

9. Berl Katznelson, *Arakhim genuzim* (Hidden Values), Ephraim Broide (ed.), Tel Aviv: Ayanot, 1957, p. 111.

10. Yitzhak Shenhar, "Shir haherut" (The Song of Freedom).

11. Anton Semyonovich Makarenko, *Hapoema hapedagogit* (The Pedagogical Poem), Avraham Shlonsky (trans.), Merhavia: Sifriat Hapoalim, 1939; Valentin Petrovich Kataev, *Mifras boded malbin ba'ofek* (A White Sail Gleams), Leah Goldberg (trans.), Merhavia: Sifriat Hapoalim, 1942.

12. Alexander Bek, *Anshei Panfilov* (Panfilov's Men), Shlomo Even-Shoshan (trans.), Ein Harod: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1946.

13. David Maletz, *Ma'agalot* (Circles), Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1945; S. Yizhar, *Ephraim hozer la'aspeset* (Ephraim Goes Back to the Alfalfa)—first published in *Gilyonot*, ed. Yitzhak Lamdan, 1938. Reprinted in book form in 1978 (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad) and 1991 (Tel Aviv:

Zmora-Bitan); Haim Hazaz, "Haderasha" (The Sermon), *Luah Ha'aretz*, 1943, pp. 82–96. Reprinted, inter alia, in *Avanim rotkhot* (Seething Stones), Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1946, pp. 227–244.

14. Yitzhak Lamdan, "Masada," Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1952.

15. Porath, *Letters from Jerusalem*, p. 31

16. Binyamin Herzl, *Medinat hayehudim* (The Jewish State). Jerusalem edition: Jewish Agency, 1986, p. 75.

17. This particular line appears in the first draft of the poem, dated 1923. *Kol kitvei Shaul Tschernichovsky* (Collected Works), Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1990, vol. 1: Poems and Ballads, pp. 253–255.

18. Aharon Ze'ev, "Anu nos'im lapidim" (We Are Carrying Torches), *Shirei Hanukkah: kovetz shirim me'et malkhinim umehabrim shonim* (Hanukkah Songs: A Collection of Songs by Various Composers and Lyricists), Tel Aviv: Renen, 1971.

19. Nathan Alterman, "Shir boker" (Morning Song).

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