Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History
Journal of the Fondazione CDEC
QUESTIONI DI STORIA EBRAICA CONTEMPORANEA. RIVISTA DELLA FONDAZIONE CDEC

Training for Aliyah*: Young Jews in* Hachsharot *across Europe between the 1930s and late 1940s*

edited by *Verena Buser and Chiara Renzo*

Issue 21, no. 1 (2022)

QUEST. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History
Journal of the Fondazione CDEC

CDEC Fondazione Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea

QUEST. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History. Journal of the Fondazione CDEC
Reg. Trib. Milano n. 403 del 18/09/2009 – P. IVA: 12559570150 – ISSN: 2037-741X
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Cover image credit: Aldouby and representatives of the groups "Nitzanim" and "Dror" from the youth village in Santa Maria al Bagno during the joint Sukkot celebration of the UNRRA DP camps in Lecce province, southern Italy, 1946, Photo 23/1, Aldouby's Private Collection, Jerusalem, Israel.

Contents

DISCUSSIONS

REVIEWS

CDEC Foundation: A new Venue for the Library and Archive

by *Gadi Luzzatto Voghera*

I am very proud to announce that the CDEC Foundation (Contemporary Jewish Documentation Center) inaugurated its new headquarters at the Memorial of the Shoah in Milan, Italy, on June 14th, 2022. A place dedicated to the memory of the deportation of Jews and antifascists located in the belly of the Central Railway Station and visited by dozens of thousands of people every year is now associated with an Institution devoted to historical research. The new space houses the offices of the Educational Department, the Antisemitism Watchdog and the Department dedicated to historical research. In a separate space, in the heart of the Memorial, visitors can find the Archives and the Library, designed by the Morpurgo De Curtis architectural studio. The new library of the CDEC Foundation features large windows at street level, symbolically opening up to citizens to become a place for aggregation, dialogue and participation. The library is spread over three levels (ground floor, basement and mezzanine), has 48 reading places and is easily accessible even from considerable distances thanks to its geographical location. This is not meant to be just a place for study, reading and individual confrontation

with knowledge, but also a place of encounter, connection and pluralism. A cultural defense against disinformation, where people can take part in the circulation of knowledge and reach shared reflections. CDEC offers a welcoming and inclusive space, made available to the city, where you can spend time and imagine possible paths on which to travel together, as individuals and as a community. Next to the library, it is possible to use the Auditorium for conferences and public events, and various laboratory spaces for organizing workshops and educational events. Temporary exhibitions are displayed in the same area in a pleasant exhibition space.

The CDEC Foundation archive is partly included in the library space and collects paper and digital documentation related to the history of Jews in Italy from the age of emancipation to the present day. About 600 linear meters of material have been preserved here since the mid-1950s. The collections, both personal and belonging to Jewish organizations and institutions include, among other things, testimonies, personal papers, diaries, memoirs and photographs. The inventory of the collection is available on the Foundation's online website www.cdec.it in the section dedicated to the Digital Library http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/.

We imagine these spaces as the most appropriate to give substance to the existing conventions and agreements with universities and research departments, offering young researchers the opportunity to spend periods of work in a welcoming place that offers the largest specialized library and archival collection on contemporary Judaism in Italy.

Gadi Luzzatto Voghera, CDEC Foundation Director

Training for *Aliyah*: Young Jews in *Hachsharot* across Europe between the 1930s and late 1940s

by *Verena Buser* and *Chiara Renzo*

Introduction*

This monographic issue of *Quest* deals with the history of the *hachsharah* (pl. *hachsharot*), a term meaning literally "preparation" in Hebrew, but whose translation or interpretation varied among "collective farm," "vocational training," "retraining center" and "agricultural training." Though the nature of hachsharot varied in space and time, the term steadily referred to the practical preparation of young Jews for emigration to Eretz Israel (the Land of Israel), through both mental and physical training based on work, collective living, and the study of the Hebrew language, Jewish history and culture. This preparation—aiming at the transformation of the whole personality—was often carried out in collective centers gathering (generally) young Jews. The creation and development of the hachsharot in the Diaspora is part of a unique and complex chapter within the history of Zionism, that of the He-Halutz, i.e. the pioneering movement, and its collaboration with Jewish organizations in their respective countries. The He-Halutz—having its foundation before World War I in the Russian Empire and its consolidation in interwar Poland—drew on the principles of Labour Zionism, grounding the Jewish national project in the emigration to Eretz Israel (*aliyah*) and the establishment of an economy based on agriculture. Originally established to train the new *halutzim* (pioneers), the following history of the hachsharot is deeply entangled with the history of the kibbutz, as well as with the contradiction between its utopian aspirations and its daily uncomfortable reality, and the difficult encounter between newcomers and veterans therein.[1] However, against

* The first section of this Introduction has been jointly written by Verena Buser and Chiara Renzo, "Hachsharot in Sweden and the Protectorate Bohemia and Moravia after the rise of National Socialism" was written by Verena Buser, "Hachsharot after the Holocaust" was written by Chiara Renzo.

[1] For a comprehensive history of the kibbutz movement, see Henry Near, *The Kibbutz Movement: A History*, vol. 1 "Origins and growth, 1909-1939" (Oxford: published for the Littman library by

the theoretical and ideological constructions of Zionist parties, the distinguishing feature of the He-Halutz lied in its effort to make self-fulfillment (in Hebrew *hagshamah*)—intended as the fulfilment of the Zionist ideals by aliyah and life in a kibbutz—a concrete experience through hachsharah.[2] In a way that recalled the approach of Jewish youth movements, other crucial features that characterized He-Halutz from its inception were the emphasis on a democratic and egalitarian attitude, on mutual help and informal relationships as the basis of collective living during hachsharah. However, as the movement grew and the numbers of adherents in its ranks increased, especially after Hitler came to power, its internal structure, leadership and ideology became more formalized and partisan-based.[3]

The history of the hachsharot has been mainly analyzed in studies which have privileged a regional approach in order to investigate He-Halutz's operations or as part of broader studies on Zionist immigration policy and rescue attempts by the Yishuv during and after the Holocaust.[4] Instead, the focus of this monographic issue is not limited to the analysis of how the various branches of He-Halutz developed their programs in different national contexts in Europe vis-à-vis the rise of National Socialism, instability in post-war Europe and Zionist migration policy. Binding together two moments which have been usually considerate as separate in the analysis of the hachsharot—i.e. the wartime and the post-war period—we adopt a "perspective from within." In doing so, our primary objective is to explore how these crucial factors and events impacted on the lives of those European Jews who joined the hachsharot with the final goal to escape persecutions during the war or rebuild their lives after the Holocaust.

Oxford university, 1992), vol. 2 "Crisis and achievement, 1939-1995" (London - Portland: The Littman library of Jewish civilization, 1997). On the integration of the Holocaust survivors in the kibbutzim see: Hanna Yablonka, *Survivors of the Holocaust: Israel after the War* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1999), 153-230.

[2] Israel Oppenheim, *The Struggle of Jewish Youth for Productivization: The Zionist Youth Movement in Poland* (Boulder, CO: Eastern European Monographs, 1989).

[3] Asher Cohen and Yehoyakim Cochavi, *Zionist Youth Movement during the Shoah* (New York: Peter Land, 1995).

[4] For the state of art of the history of He-Halutz and the hachsharot in the countries and regions considered in this monographic issue of *Quest* we refer to the analysis and references of the individual essays included in this volume.

Hence, through case studies on wartime Sweden and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, and post-war Greece, Italy, Romania, and Hungary, in this issue we situate the Jewish experience(s) and daily life in the hachsharot at the center of our analysis. The essays cast light on who were the young Jews who joined the hachsharot in Europe between the 1930s and the 1940s, their individual and collective struggles to endure the selection process for aliyah, their contrasting feelings while experiencing collective living, and their motivations and expectations. In order to uncover these aspects, we have intertwined institutional sources with ego-documents and oral history testimonies from former trainees or Holocaust survivors who reflected retrospectively on their experience while living in the hachsharot. Such a wide-range of sources constitute the prism through which the authors of the essays collected in this issue could move beyond the ideological and political dimension which predominated in the Zionist narratives and reports surrounding the hachsharot. Shifting the gaze from a macro- to a micro-history level and adopting different methodologies which draw on sociological surveys, a biographical approach, a cultural perspective, the gender dimension, the history of emotions, and a focus on memory, this issue of *Quest* contributes to revealing how hachsharah participants concretely related to Zionism and aliyah, and to which extent their decision to join a training center for emigration was based on political or national ideologies, or rather on the hope to have a better chance to leave Europe.

Through this issue, our shared goal is to re-discuss the role of the hachsharot and depict the complex and nuanced reality of life within them, questioning the Zionist affiliation of their participants and challenging the idea of hachaharah as a warm and welcoming environment serving as the stepping stone for aliyah.

Hachsharot in Sweden and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia after the rise of National Socialism

A synthesis of the situation and development of pre- and post-war hachsharot sheds light on the shifting character, the protagonists and goals of emigration training. In pre-war Sweden or the Protectorate, but also in other European countries, hachsharot were far more than sites of transformation and preparation.

Training in Zionist, but also in non-Zionist training sites like in Nazi Germany, had the character of a "surrogate school" and was a form of youth work for the Jewish communities. It had many interfaces with the Youth Aliyah, which taught similar lesson plans, like the middle-hachsharah.[5]

Malin Thor Tureby has published extensively on hachsharot and He-Halutz in Swedish. In this article she revisits her dissertation, other previous publications and various sources from and about the movement to give an overview of the history of He-Halutz in Sweden, where the experiences and perspectives of the people who came to Sweden through the halutz-quota are at the center. Drawing from various unpublished materials produced within the movement in Sweden as well as interviews with former members of He-Halutz, the aim is to place the persons who entered Sweden through the halutz-quota as central actors in the text, both as important agents in the past and as constructors of the stories about that past. Informed by current discussions in oral history, Holocaust studies and Refugees studies, Thor Tureby creates a refugee/survivor-centered narrative that offers new/original perspectives on the He-Haluz movement and Jewish exile in Sweden during the 1930's and 1940's.

Daniela Bartáková analyses Zionist activities in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia from the time when completion of hachsharah training became a prerequisite for obtaining an emigration certificate, and the reorganization of hachsharah training centers became a crucial task for Zionists. She focuses on changes in age groups, social status of emigration candidates and trainees, reorganization of training camps from the perspective of the Zionist movement as well as temporal changes of the Jewish geography in the former territory of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.

[5] The term "middle-hachsharah" refers to a training initiative for Jewish teenagers who had just finished schooling and had no chance to start a vocational training due to restrictions or exclusion from several professions. Verena Buser, "Hachsharot after 1933 - Welfare, Child Care and Educational Aspects," in *Jewish horticultural schools and training centers in Germany and their impact on horticulture and landscape architecture in Palestine/Israel*, eds. Tal Alon-Mozes, Irene Aue-Ben-David, and Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn (München: AVM - Akademische Verlagsgemeinschaft, 2019), 23-38.

Hachsharot in Sweden were connected to the Auslandshachscharah movement (hachsharah abroad), which was set up step by step by German-Jewish Zionists in collaboration with the Swedish He-Halutz. In the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia the idea of retraining was an integral part of the Zionist program within the so called "normalization" of the Jewish nation and its employment structure—a process which was already under way in pre-Hitler Germany and after the Nazi regime came to power. Training centers were reserved for Jewish youth and young adults, were connected to Zionist movements and predominantly run under the supervision of He-Halutz.

While in the post-war period a great number of trainees lived in hachsharot, often for pragmatic reasons and without the declared intention of building a new social order in Eretz Israel, the sites operated against a wide spectrum of historical actors and political interests. The trainees themselves had many choices of action, even though their decisions were largely based on emigration efforts and the possibility of escaping. Until the beginning of the Second World War they still had a small chance—against the background of the Nazi regime's brutal antisemitic policy of exclusion and expulsion—to leave Germany to other destinations apart from Mandate Palestine. In the aftermath of the Holocaust hachsharah had only one goal: transferring camp survivors and refugees - of whom the majority were from the Soviet Union—through illegal refugee ships on the basis of their political-Zionist affiliation. As of May 1939 the British White Paper still limited immigration strictly to a quota of 1500 persons per month.[6]

Hachsharot after the Holocaust

> Seventy people from different worlds have come to live together; they sit at one table and work towards one goal, though they are a collection of every possible attitude towards the world. The kibbutz that binds them is beautifully placed in a harmony of blue sky, black forest, and fresh green fields, sometimes burnished with the bright yellow color of harvest. In a

[6] For British Immigration Policy see Hagit Lavsky, *The Creation of the German-Jewish Diaspora* (München: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2017) or Anita Shapira, *Land and Power: The Zionist Resort to Force, 1881-1948* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

> house amidst all this peace and beauty live the Buchenwalders—people with sick hearts living their way out of a horrible past. People who dream of the time when they will breathe deeply of the cleansing and healing air of Palestine. Lonesome people who are trying to put together an imitation of a new family.[7]

This entry appeared in the diary of what is known as "Kibbutz Buchenwald," the first *kibbutz hachsharah* established on German soil at the end of the Second World War. Its creation was promoted by a group of pre-war leaders and active members of Zionist movements who, while in concentration camps, just a few months before the end of the war, started to plan the establishment of Jewish associations and committees of self-help with the goal of rebuilding their lives after liberation.[8] The above entry—signed by "a *halutzah*" (in Hebrew, female for "pioneer")—sheds light on the diverse background and nature of the people who joined Kibbutz Buchewald and, at the same time, their shared mixed feelings of hope and pain, their deep loneliness and desperate search for companionship and family. Grappling with their sorrow, fears, and anxieties in the apparent peaceful and warm environment of Kibbutz Buchenwald, the *halutzim* lived their experience of hachsharah as a "way out of a horrible past," a transition towards their future lives. Despite being short, this excerpt from the diary of Kibbutz Buchenwald faithfully portrays the multi-faced reality of hachsharah after the Holocaust, as the four articles dedicated to this period in this issue of *Quest* will show.

The history of the hachsharot after the Second World War and the Holocaust can be fully grasped only in close relation to Jews' efforts and determination to reconstruct their lives and the political, social and cultural factors that influenced such a painful and lengthy process. Their establishment within the refugee camps or nearby what remained of former Jewish communities across Europe entangled

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[7] Meyer Levin, ed., *Kibbutz Buchenwald: Selections From the Kibbutz Diary* (Tel-Aviv: Lion the Printer, 1946), 59-60.

[8] For the foundation and history of Kibbutz Buchenwald see Judith Tydor Baumel, *Kibbutz Buchenwald: Survivors and Pioneers* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997); Avinoam Patt, *Finding Home and Homeland: Jewish Youth and Zionism in the Aftermath of the Holocaust* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2009).

with what is commonly named "the liberation" and the complex consequences this moment brought both to global and local politics, and especially to people's individual lives. The end of the hostilities has been long interpreted, represented, and remembered as a turning point, paving the way towards democratization in Europe and a new beginning in the war victims' lives. However, despite the significance of this moment in contemporary history, the end of the war in 1945 did not directly open the doors to a new era, neither from a global perspective nor from an individual one. Indeed, Europe's recovery and the setting up of a new post-war order led to a convoluted and never-ending process of reconstruction which started and developed in parallel with the outset of the Cold War.[9] Against this backdrop, the re-assessment and rebuilding of individual lives was no less an uneven and long process.[10]

Even if the experiment of Kibbutz Buchenwald is unique, the seeds of all the activities aiming to gather and prepare groups of survivors for emigration to British Palestine sprouted all over Europe. In the turmoil that followed the liberation, Jewish partisans, activists, former leaders, and representatives of Zionist movements established local self-help committees in order to respond to essential needs and explore escape routes to leave Europe.[11] These efforts by Holocaust survivors soon found the encouragement of the Jewish soldiers in the Allied Army and later the support of the delegates of Zionist movements from Palestine (in Hebrew known as *shlihim*).[12]

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[9] For two pioneering studies which challenge our understanding of the Second post-war period as a turning point in the history of Europe see Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (London: Penguin Books,1998) and Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945*, (London: Penguin Books, 2005).

[10] For a study that frames the end of the Second World War and the liberation of the concentration camps in a historical perspective see Dan Stone, *The Liberation of the Camps: The End of the Holocaust and Its Aftermath* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015).

[11] On the establishment of self-help committees in concentration camps see Zeev Mankovitz, *Life Between Memory and Hope: The Survivors of the Holocaust in Occupied Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 24-51; on the *Brichah* (Hebrew for flight)—the underground effort that helped Jewish Holocaust survivors escape post–World War II Eastern Europe to reach possible embarkation points for Palestine—see Yehuda Bauer, *Flight and Rescue: Brichah* (New York: Random House, 1970).

[12] For an overview of the activities of Jewish soldiers in liberated Italy see Yoav Gelber, "The meeting between the Jewish soldiers from Palestine serving in the British Army and She'erit Hapletah", in *She'erit Hapletah, 1944-*1948, eds. Yisrael Gutman and Avital Saf (Jerusalem: Yad

In fact, this encounter between the European diaspora and the Yishuv after the Holocaust revolved around aliyah, now charged with a new twofold meaning. Facing the dramatic news on the situation of European Jewry, the Zionist leadership in Palestine began to think about aliyah in different terms, and not just in regard to its economic connection with the Yishuv's absorption capacity. The Yishuv leadership imagined that a larger-scale aliyah could respond to the survivors' real need for resettlement, while—at the same time—putting an uncomfortable moral pressure on the British Mandate to ease restrictions on entry to Palestine. Therefore, by the end of the war, the *Aliyah bet* (or *ha-'apalah*), the illegal immigration of Jews into Palestine in violation of the British authorities' restriction on aliyah, was adopted by the leadership of the Yishuv as one of the primary means to challenge the Mandatory Government. By keeping alive the plight of the homeless Jews in Europe after the atrocities of the Holocaust, the Yishuv aimed to embarrass the British through the moral and political power embodied by Holocaust survivors.[13] As the result of intense Zionist propaganda and the establishment of an underground way to reach Palestine, a flurry of activities to prepare new candidates for aliyah burgeoned among Jewish survivors. In turn, the number of hachsharot grew, becoming ever more politicized as they were run by single Zionist youth movements under the supervision of He-Halutz. Indeed, as the Mossad Le-Aliyah Bet established its branches in Europe and the presence of the Zionist movements and organisations increased considerably, the

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Vashem, 1990). For a collection of *shlichim's* accounts of the mission of the United Kibbutz Movement in Europe and North Africa between 1945 and 1948 see: Yad Tabenkin and Ghetto Fighters House, eds., *Shlihut La-Golah* [Mission in the Diaspora] (Yad Tabenkin: Tel Aviv, 1989). On Youth Aliyah see: Shlomo Bar-Gil, *Mehapsim bayit motz'im moledet: 'Aliyat Ha-No'ar be-hinukh u-ve- shikum She'erit Ha-Pletah, 1945-1955* [Looking for home, finding homeland: Youth Aliyah in the education and rehabilitation of She'erit Ha-Pletah 1945-1955] (Jerusalem: Yad Yitzhak Ben Tzvi, 1999).

[13] On the Yishuv's migration policy and attitude towards the Holocaust during the Second World War see, Dalia Ofer, *Escaping the Holocaust: Illegal Immigration to the Land of Israel, 1939-1944* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Dina Porat, *The Blue and the Yellow Stars of David: The Zionist Leadership in Palestine and the Holocaust, 1939–1945* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990). On the *aliyah bet* in relation to the British Mandate after the Second World War see Aviva Halamish, *The Exodus Affair. Holocaust Survivors and the Struggle for Palestine* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1998); Idith Zertal, *From Catastrophe to Power: Holocauts Survivors and the Emergence of Israel* (Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 1998); Arieh J. Kochavi, *Post-Holocaust Politics: Britain, the United States & Jewish Refugees, 1945-1948* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

hachsharot became indissolubly linked to the new immigration strategies adopted by the Yishuv. While the chances to be selected for aliyah and reach Palestine continued to be very limited, partisanship exasperated the fight for the aliyah quotas, determined according to each political party's strength within the Jewish Agency and their relative power within the kibbutz movements in British Palestine.

The Yishuv, moreover, was concerned not only with actually bringing the surviving Jews of the Diaspora to Eretz Israel, but also with securing their transformation from survivors to *olim* (Hebrew for "those who make Aliyah"), or better, *halutzim*. This triggered an intense debate on the nature of "what remained of the European diaspora" in the Yishuv's leadership and society, who looked at the survivors as "human dust," "broken spirits," "physically weak," constantly questioning their ability to contribute to the creation of the Jewish national project. The Yishuv's attitude towards the newcomers was hesitant, judgemental and doubtful even in the case of those who had endured training in the hachsharot. This unexpected epilogue of the European Jews' training efforts after the Holocaust, made this experience even more disappointing and harsh for those who eventually succeeded in emigrating to Palestine/Israel.[14]

The articles of this monographic issue of *Quest* dedicated to the hachsharot in post-war Europe offer new insights on Jews' life in the hachsharot in two southern European countries—Greece during the Civil War and the DP camps in Italy, chosen by the Jewish Agency as a privileged headquarter for Aliyah bet—and in two countries in Eastern Europe, i.e. Romania and Hungary, threatened by the rise of communist regimes.

Katerina Kralova's article traces the history of three hachsharot set up between 1945 and 1949 in Athens and Thessaloniki, and the experiences of their few hundred members, almost exclusively survivors of Nazi concentration camps. Using the records of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and some reports of the International Committee of the Red Cross, the author depicts the difficult living conditions in these collective training centers and examines the roles

[14] On the social integration of Holocaust survivors in Israel see Yablonka, *Survivors of the Holocaust*.

of the actors involved in running the hachsharot. At the same time, intertwining these institutional sources with the analysis of some rare personal accounts by former hachsharah members, the article sheds light on the emotional and daily life struggles endured by the Jewish survivors who returned to Greece and decided to join the hachsharah. Shifting the focus of her analysis from the perspective of the Zionist and Jewish organizations to that of the witnesses who lived within the training centers, Kralova introduces a key factor that moved Greek survivors towards the decision to join the hachsharot: the fear of the Civil War and the risk of participating in another conflict through military conscription.

The article co-authored by Achinoam Aldouby, Michal Peles-Almagor and Chiara Renzo is primarily based on the private archives of Zvi Aldouby, a Zionist delegate of the Mapai party in charge of "cultural affairs" in the DP camps in Italy. Exploring his mission, the authors challenge the traditional idea of hachsharah as a preparation for aliyah based primarily on physical and agricultural training. On the contrary, Zvi Aldouby privileged theatre as a channel to educate Jewish DPs about life in Eretz Israel, using the stage for political and ideological discussions surrounding Jewish identity, the rejection of the diaspora, aliyah and Zionism. Adopting an interdisciplinary approach to analyse a diverse set of sources (official reports, correspondence, personal diaries, sketches, photographs and drawings), this article frames the activities of He-Halutz within the predominantly Zionist environment of the Italian refugee camps and offers an in-depth analysis of two theatrical plays directed by Zvi Aldouby as step-by-step training towards aliyah: *The Golem* by H. Leivick and *This Land* by A. Ashman.

Moving to Eastern Europe, Blanka Lebzester's diary is the lens through which Julie Dawson portrays the situation of the hachsharot in Romania in the early years after the Holocaust. Fortuitously found in the women's balcony of a shuttered synagogue in a small Transylvanian town, this ego-document provides a close look into the struggles faced by two Romanian Jewish women (the author of the diary and her mother), repatriated after their deportation to Transnistria. As the sole survivors of their entire family, the two women left for Constanța, where Blanka Lebzester joined the hachsharah, leaving her mother behind. The younger woman's feelings of alienation and frustration for both the separation from her

mother and the long waited aliyah in an uncomfortable environment dominate this first-person account. In stressing these aspects, Dawson intertwines biography and micro-history to question the hachsharah as a site of rehabilitation, empowerment and social interaction, demonstrating instead its limits in responding to the most compelling needs of its fellow members.

Finally, the article co-authored by Ildiko Barna and Kinga Szemere examines the situation of the hachsharot in post-war Hungary through a systematic survey of 101 oral testimonies from the USC Shoah Foundation's Visual History Archives. By focusing on the minority of Hungarian Jews who decided to leave the country, the article explores the hachsharah members' backgrounds and motivations behind such a decision, their actual attachment to Zionism, and their difficult encounter with Israeli society after aliyah. Barna and Szemere—using oral testimonies as the main sources for their investigation, and aware of their potentials and limitations—depict a long-term picture of the Jewish experience in Hungarian hachsharot. From this sociological survey it emerges that, while interviewees shared mainly positive memories of their time in the training farms in Hungary, they remembered their arrival and integration in Israel as a challenging and unexpectedly tormented process, which disappointed the expectations raised in the hachsharot.

This collection of essays cannot fully encompass all the nuances of the history of the hachsharot in Europe. However, inquiring into specific case studies, this monographic issue of *Quest* aims to set the stage for rethinking the hachsharot, by taking into account both their changing functions in space and time and the voices of those who experienced the training personally. This perspective allows us to delve into the reasons that led young Jews to join the hachsharot in order to make aliyah, their emotions and expectations, thus contributing to a more intimate portrait of Jewish life in Europe and its relationship with the Yishuv between the 1930s and 1940s.

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Verena Buser holds a PhD from Potsdam University of Applied Sciences and Western Galilee College, Akko. Her research focuses on the areas of *Hachshara* and non-Zionist emigration preparations; childhood and youth during and after the Shoah; the forced Germanization of Polish children; the history of social work; and Jewish functionaries under Nazi rule. Her work is supported by the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture and the Leo Baeck Institute in New York, the Hadassah Brandeis Institute in Waltham and the Edith Saurer Fonds in Vienna. Together with Dr. Boaz Cohen (Western Galilee College) she is founder of the project *Children after the Holocaust, War and Genocide* (cwg1945.org). She published a number of articles, edited the memoirs of Heinrich Demerer, *Als Kind in NS-Konzentrationslagern. Aufzeichnungen* (2009) and is the author of *Überleben von Kindern und Jugendlichen in den Konzentrationslagern Sachsenhausen, Auschwitz und Bergen-Belsen*.

Chiara Renzo is postdoctoral fellow at Ca' Foscari University, Venice. She holds a Phd in History from the joint doctoral program of the Universities of Florence and Siena (2017) and has been postdoctoral fellow at the University of Florence (2020-22), Yad Vashem (2019) and Rothschild Hanadiv Europe postdoctoral fellow at Ca' Foscari (2017-19). Her research mainly deals with Jewish exile and internment in fascist Italy, the Jewish displacement after the Second World War, and the history of Jewish humanitarian organizations in the twentieth century. Currently, she is working on a monograph entitled "Jewish DPs in Italy 1943-1951: politics, rehabilitation, identity".

Keywords: Hachsharah, Zionism, Europe, Holocaust, Aliyah

How to quote this article:
Verena Buser and Chiara Renzo, "Introduction," in "Training for *Aliyah*: Young Jews in *Hachsharot* across Europe between the 1930s and late 1940s," eds. Verena Buser and Chiara Renzo, *Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History. Journal of the Fondazione CDEC* 21, no. 1 (2022), DOI: 10.48248/issn.2037-741X/13302

Experiencing and Remembering the *Hachsharah*. Documents and Stories from and about the He-Halutz in Sweden

by *Malin Thor Tureby*

Abstract

In the spring of 1933, the halutz*-quota was established in Sweden. This quota gave young German Jews the possibility to come to Sweden as transmigrants to receive training in agricultural work for 18 months and then continue to Palestine. In total, between the years 1933-1941 490 teenagers were sent to Sweden through the* halutz*-quota. The focus of this article is on how and what the young people communicate about their time in Sweden in different sources. Drawing from various unpublished materials produced within the movement in Sweden as well as interviews with former members of the He-Halutz, the aim is to place the persons who entered Sweden through the halutz-quota as central actors in the text, both as important agents in the past and as constructors of the stories of that past.*

Introduction: Survivors as Agents in the Past and as Constructors of the Stories of that Past

> The destinies of young Jewish persons who happened to come to Sweden and lived there isolated from the events of the world and the Jewish people for many years can certainly be of interest, as their experiences can be compared to the experiences of other Jewish and non-Jewish refugees during the same period [...].[1]

This quotation comes from an unpublished manuscript, "Die Schwedische Hachscharah 1933–1948 und Geschichte des Schwedischen Hechaluz",[2] about the history of the *hachsharah* and the He-Halutz movement in Sweden, written by Seew Shalmon in 1949.[3] Shalmon was one of the 490 young people who were granted entry from Germany into Sweden through the *halutz*-quota between the years 1933 and 1941.[4] He wrote the nearly 200-page history of He-Halutz in Sweden at the request of Emil Glück, the benefactor of He-Halutz in Sweden.[5] His version was never published; however, Glück published a book in Swedish in the mid-1980s that is largely based on Shalmon's work.[6] Seew Shalmon and his

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[1] Seew Smulowi[c]z (Shalmon), "Die Schwedische Hachscharah 1933–1948 und Geschichte des Schwedische Hechaluz," (Unpublished manuscript, 1949), p. 2, Sweden Collection O74/1, Yad Vashem Archives, Jerusalem, [Author's translation from the original German to English].

[2] The transliteration of Hebrew terms in this article follows the transliteration rules of the journal. However, He-Halutz in Sweden used other transliteration rules. This is why I when referring to titles and quotes from and about the movement in Sweden, I follow the transliteration rules of the movement in Sweden. For example, He-Halutz was spelled Hechaluz within the movement in Sweden (as in the title of Shalmon's manuscript).

[3] Seew Smulowicz was originally named Willi Smulowicz. In Sweden, he changed his first name to a Hebrew first name (Seew). Later in Israel, he also changed his surname Smulowicz to Shalmon. I refer to him as Seew Shalmon in this text.

[4] As Seew Shalmon could speak and read Hebrew, he was soon released from the obligatory farm work. Instead, he worked as a Hebrew teacher within the He-Halutz movement. In 1945 he worked as a counselor in various reception camps for survivors in Sweden. He passed away before I started my research on He-Halutz, which is why I never had the opportunity to meet him. However, I met his widow Esther Shalmon (née Warburg) in Israel in early 2001.

[5] Interview with Esther Shalmon (née Warburg), March 3, 2001, interviewed by Malin Thor (Tureby).

[6] Emil Glück, *På väg till Israel. Hachscharah i Sverige 1933–1948. Transmigrationen av judisk ungdom från Nazi-Tyskland för utbildning i lantbruk m.m. och vidare vandring till Palestina* (Stockholm: Författares Bokmaskin, 1985).

manuscript is one example of how refugees and survivors can be important agents in the past and at the same time important knowledge producers of that past. Shalmon's manuscript is also an example of how diverse experiences during the Holocaust were documented and interpreted by the persecuted in different countries and contexts during and immediately after the war. As previous research has concluded, this documentation came to significantly affect the development of Holocaust studies in the twentieth century.[7] It is often argued that Swedish Holocaust historiography did not emerge until the 1990s. For example, historian Paul A. Levine wrote in the middle of 1990s that although an extensive historical literature about Sweden during the Second World War existed, only one study, Steven Koblik's *The Stones Cry out Sweden's Response to the Persecution of Jews 1933–1945*, discussed Sweden's response to the Holocaust.[8] Levine's own dissertation about Swedish diplomacy during the Holocaust should according to the logic of this argument be the second study in Swedish Holocaust studies. The historical literature about Sweden during the Second World War Levine refers to as "extensive" includes about 20 doctoral dissertations, focusing on Swedish politics, opinions and foreign policies and relations during the war, published in the 1970s and 1980s within the framework of the research project, "Sverige under andra världskriget," (SUAV, Sweden During the Second World War).[9] Still, though Koblik and Levine's works addressed Sweden's relation to the Holocaust and not Sweden's situation or foreign policies during the war, one can argue that they followed the same path as previous research, mainly focusing on the Swedish state's perspectives and political histories. It should also be noticed that one year before Levine's dissertation was published, historian Lars Olsson published a

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[7] See for example Boaz Cohen, *Israeli Holocaust research: Birth and evolution* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013); Sharon Geva, "Documenters, Researchers and Commemorators. The Life Stories and Work of Miriam Novitch and Rachel Auerbach in Comparative Perspective," *Moreshet: Journal for the Study of the Holocaust and Antisemitism* 16 (2019): 56-91; Laura Jockusch, *Collect and Record! Jewish Holocaust Documentation in Early Postwar Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Samuel D. Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History? Emanuel Ringelblum, the Warsaw Ghetto, and the Oyneg Shabes Archive* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007).

[8] Paul A. Levine, *From Indifference to Activism: Swedish Diplomacy and the Holocaust 1938–44* (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 1996), 30-32.

[9] Stig Ekman, "The research Project Sweden during the Second World War (SUAV)," *Meddelande från Arbetarrörelsens arkiv och bibliotek* 16, no. 4 (1980): 16-22.

book on how survivors from the Holocaust were integrated in the Swedish labor market.[10] Hence, as I have suggested elsewhere, one can argue that Holocaust studies in Sweden had more than one beginning.[11] Further, about the same time as Koblik's, Levine's and Olsson's books were published, two dissertations based on oral history and with survivor-centered perspectives were published.[12] Also, Holocaust testimonies were collected and Holocaust archives created even before the Second World War ended and these collecting, documenting, writing and researching activities continued in Sweden with the arrival of the survivors. Most of these "survivor stories" were intended to be used as evidence in Nazi trials or for future scientific or historical studies. In a recently published report on scholarship about Holocaust testimonies and survivor stories in Sweden we concluded that little research exists on the situatedness of Swedish collection efforts in a greater European and international context.[13] Although some efforts have been made recently to highlight that the survivors themselves were some of the most ardent collectors of testimonies and creators of survivor stories, these aspects of Holocaust historiography in Sweden need to be further explored.[14] As argued above, Seew

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[10] Lars Olsson, *På tröskeln till folkhemmet. Baltiska flyktingar och polska koncentrationslägerfångar som reservarbetskraft i skånskt jordbruk kring slutet av andra världskriget* (Lund: Morgonrodnad, 1995). An English edition of the book was published two years later: *On the threshold of the People's home of Sweden: A Labor Perspective of Baltic Refugees and Relieved Polish Concentration Camp Prisoners in Sweden at the End of World War II* (New York: Center for Migration Studies, 1997).

[11] Malin Thor Tureby, "Svenska judars berättelser om flyktingar, överlevande och hjälpverksamheter under och efter Förintelsen," *Nordisk Judaistik* 31, no. 2 (2020): 60-84, for the discussion about Holocaust historiography in Sweden see 61-63.

[12] Mirjam Sterner Carlberg, *Gemenskap och överlevnad. Om den judiska gruppen i Borås och dess historia* (Göteborg: Göteborgs Universitet, 1994); Ingrid Lomfors, *Förlorad barndom – återvunnet liv. De judiska flyktingbarnen från Nazityskland*, (Göteborg: Göteborgs Universitet, 1996).

[13] Malin Thor Tureby and Kristin Wagrell, *Vittnesmål från Förintelsen och de överlevandes berättelser. Definitioner, insamlingar och användningar, 1939–2020* (Stockholm: Forum för levande historia, 2020).

[14] See for example Izabela A. Dahl, " '...this is material arousing interest in common history': Zygmunt Łakociński and Polish Survivors' Protocols," *Jewish History Quarterly* 223, no. 3 (2007): 319-338; Dahl, "Collective Memory and National Identity Construction. Polish Survivors' Records in Sweden," in *Landscapes after Battle. Justice, Politics and Memory in Europe after the Second World War*, eds. David Cesarani, Suzanne Bardgett, Jessica Reinisch, and Dieter Steinert (London - Portland: Valentine Mitchell Publishers, 2011), 169-186. See also Victoria Van Orden Martinez, "Witnessing against a divide? An analysis of early Holocaust testimonies constructed in interviews

Shalmon's manuscript might also be understood as part of an early documentation and knowledge production on Sweden and the Holocaust.[15] Another example in connection to the Hachsharah and the He-Halutz in Sweden are Eli Getreu writings and works. Eli Getreu was, just like Seew Shalmon, a member of the He-Halutz in Sweden. In 1946-1948 he worked as a teacher at Smedsbo, a school for children and young people who came to Sweden as survivors in 1945. He collected his pupils' testimonies and stories. In 1953, he published an 80-page long article about his pupils' experiences during the Holocaust. Getreu and his work are very rarely referred to or mentioned as part of the research field of Holocaust studies in Sweden. Holocaust survivors have in general not been taken into account by Holocaust historiography and Holocaust studies in Sweden.[16] They have not been recognized as experts or authorities on knowledge about the Holocaust. They have rather been excluded as agents in research on the Holocaust and are often ignored as important knowledge producers of that past. The questions of authority and when, how and for whom stories from or about the Holocaust are documented and told also relates to the research field of oral history where the art of participatory practice, shared/sharing authority, sustained conversations and collaborative interpretation in knowledge production has been elaborated for many years.[17] Oral historian and Holocaust

between Jewish and non-Jewish Poles," *Holocaust Studies: A Journal of Culture and History* 27 (2021). Accessed June 22, 2022, https://doi.org/10.1080/17504902.2021.1981627.

[15] The definition of who is included in the concept of "survivor" is under debate and changes over time. One could argue that since Seew Shalmon and his group of halutzim came to Sweden between the years 1933-1941, before the mass killings had started, they should not be defined as "survivors." However, Shalmon's manuscript includes the years after 1941 and includes his perspectives on meeting with the Danish halutzim and the survivors from the concentration camps that arrived in Sweden during the spring and summer of 1945. Furthermore, many of the halutzim that I met in the 1990's referred to themselves as survivors, not refugees. Immediately after the war the most common term were "*sherit hapletah"*: that term included every Jewish person that was alive in Europe, regardless of how they survived (in hiding, in the camps, as refugees etc.). For a discussion on the concept "survivor," see for example Alina Bothe and Markus Nesselrodt, "Survivor: Towards a Conceptual History," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 61 (2016): 57-82.

[16] Thor Tureby and Wagrell, *Vittnesmål från Förintelsen och de överlevandes berättelser.*

[17] See for example Michael Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1990); Steven High, *Oral history at the Crossroads: Sharing Life Stories of Survival and Displacement* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014); Stacey Zembrzycki, *According to Baba: A Collaborative Oral History of Sudbury's Ukrainian Community* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014).

scholar Henry Greenspan has, for example, pioneered studies of stories from the Holocaust by questioning the very concept of testimony itself, contending that the act of listening to Holocaust survivors never involves the extraction of truth from living subjects, but rather, constitutes a dialogic exchange through which the interviewer and interviewee find new ways of remembering and interpreting the past together.[18] Understanding a story about the Holocaust, though, is not only about the dialogues that take place between survivors and their partners' in conversation, but also about the institutions, both physical and discursive, whose practices influence who will be listened to, who will be considered an expert or an authority on the Holocaust and what can be said in a specific time and context. Thus, as argued by historian Tony Kushner, the creations of different documents, writings and recountings, collections and archives, are important pieces of the puzzle in a greater understanding of survivors' experiences and expressions and the place they have been allowed to take in the writing of history about the Holocaust.[19]

In Refugee studies we have not seen the same epistemological discussions or methodological developments regarding participatory practice, shared/sharing authority, sustained conversations, and collaborative interpretation as in Holocaust studies and oral history—until recently. British historian Peter Gatrell finds it striking that the ways in which refugees have been given space in the writing of history has received so little attention. He argues that in those cases where "refugees" are investigated, they are usually portrayed as an unnamed mass—passive victims of persecution, war, or revolution—not as named actors in various contexts. According to Gatrell, history writing has focused unilaterally on what is being done *to* or *for* those who are referred to as refugees rather than placing the focus on them as actors or persons.[20] Tony Kushner argues in a similar way regarding the representations of refugees in general and more specially refugees from the Holocaust in a heritage context: "Only a few and carefully

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[18] Henry Greenspan, *On Listening to Holocaust Survivors: Beyond Testimony* (St. Paul, MN: Paragon House, 2010).

[19] Tony Kushner, "Oral History at the Extremes of Human Experience: Holocaust Testimony in a Museum Setting," *Oral History* 29, no. 2 (2001): 83-94; Kushner, "Holocaust Testimony, Ethics, and the Problem of Representation," *Poetics Today* 27, no. 2 (2006): 276-295.

[20] Peter Gatrell, "Refugees – What's Wrong with History?," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 30, no.2 (2017): 170-189.

selected groups, and especially the help that was given to them, have been recognized and celebrated, especially in relation to those who escaped Nazism."[21] Gatrell stresses the importance of not getting caught up in different legal definitions and categorizations of "refugees" at different times and contexts and further explains that we must try to place the persons defined as refugees at the heart of history writing and explore their perspectives, actions, experiences, self-understandings and how they narrate displacement.[22] Inspired by the ongoing discussion within the fields of Oral History, Holocaust studies and Refugees studies, I aim to situate the persons who entered Sweden through the halutz-quota as central actors in this text, both as important agents in the past and as constructors and interpreters of the stories of that past. The overriding aim of this article is to give an overview of the history of the He-Halutz in Sweden, where the experiences and perspectives of the people who came to Sweden through the halutz-quota are at the center. To this aim, I draw from Shalmon's unpublished manuscript as well as letters and reports written by the He-Halutz members to various Zionist institutions in Europe and Palestine during the 1930s and 1940s.[23] Further, I revisit the interviews I conducted in the late 1990s with approximately 50 former *halutzim*, who, at the time, were living in Sweden or Israel.[24] The focus

[21] Tony Kushner, *Remembering Refugees: Then and Now* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 223.

[22] See for example Lauren Banko, Katarzyna Nowak, and Peter Gatrell, "What is Refugee History, Now?," *Journal of Global History* 17, no. 1 (2021): 1-19; Gatrell, "Refugees."

[23] I have previously published on the hachsharah and the He-Halutz in Sweden: Malin Thor, *Hechaluz – en rörelse i tid och rum. Tysk-judiska ungdomars exil i Sverige 1933-1943* (Växjö: Växjö University Press, 2005); Thor, "Memories of the Exile. Young German Jews Remember the Forced Emigration Experience," in *Beyond Camps and Forced Labour Current International Research on Survivors of Nazi Persecution*, eds. Johannes-Dieter Steinert and Inge Weber-Newth (Osnabrück: Secolo, 2005); Thor, "Flyktingar, transmigranter och arbetare. Hechaluz i Sverige 1933–1943," *Arbetarhistoria* 3 (2006): 43-49; Malin Thor Tureby, *Kibbutzer i Sverige. Judiska lantbrukskollektiv i Sverige 1936–1946* (Stockholm: Judiska Museet, 2012); Thor Tureby, "Pionjärer, flyktingar och överlevande: Hechaluz i Sverige 1933–1949," in *Heimat Sverige? Tysk-judisk emigration till Sverige 1774–1945*, eds. Lars M Andersson, Helmut Müssener, and Daniel Pedersen (Stockholm: Bokförlaget Faethon, 2021), 443-462. This article builds upon my previous publications on the hachsharah and the He-Halutz in Sweden. In the footnotes I refer to the relevant publication but also to the archives and documents used in the referred publications.

[24] I would like to underline that although I refer to specific recorded interviews in the footnotes, I met with several of the former halutzim multiple times. We had a continuous dialogue and conversation, about the He-Halutz and their experiences, and more importantly about their

will be on the persons who came to Sweden through the halutz-quota and on how and what they tell about their time and experiences in Sweden in different materials. Which historical experience and historical perspective emerged in the Swedish periphery? When did He-Halutz members become aware of the Holocaust and what effect did it have on their own identities? Did their perception of of their activities and goals change over time during their stay in Sweden? By answering these questions, the history of He-Halutz in Sweden will be made into a story of what is not a story, but rather several individuals' diverse experiences expressed and communicated in various recountings and writings.[25]

The Differing Stories of how It all started

Even before the Nazi takeover there was a Landesverband Hechaluz with its center in Berlin, which since the beginning of the 1920's had organized Hachsharah (training) for young people over 18 years old.[26] For the first ten years, He-Halutz in Germany consisted of about a hundred members. A massive increase in membership followed the Nazi's rise to power. The increasingly threatening situation and the influx of members led the Hechaluz Deutscher Landesverbands to explore ways to rescue Jewish youths out of Germany without giving up on the movement's ideological goals. One such way was to move the Hachsharah abroad. The Auslandshachscharah (hachsharah abroad) would be built according to the same pattern and with the same ideological content (labour zionism) and goal (*aliyah*) as the hachsharah in Germany.[27]

Organized by the He-Halutz movement in Germany, hachsharah began in Sweden in 1933 immediately after the Nazi takeover, but there are different stories

continuing lives and experiences after the Holocaust. I am still today in contact with many of their descendants.

[25] Compare Greenspan, *On Listening to Holocaust Survivors*, 20-24.

[26] Perez Leshem, *Strasse zur Rettung, 1933–1939 aus Deutschland Vertrieben - Bereitet sich Jüdische Jugend auf Palästina vor* (Tel Aviv: Verband der Freunde der Histadrut, 1973).

[27] For a detailed history of the He-Halutz in Germany, see Thor*, Hechaluz -en rörelse i tid och rum*, 78-125. See also Perez Leshem, *Strasse zur Rettung,* for an insider's perspective of the organization of Auslandshachscharah. Large parts of the section "The differing stories of how it all started" has previously been published in Thor Tureby, "Pionjärer, flyktingar och överlevande."

of how it all started, depending on whether they are told from the perspective of He-Halutz or the perspective of the Swedish state and/or helpers in Sweden.
In his book, Emil Glück claims that:

> On a visit to Berlin in the spring of 1933, I contacted Hehalutz's office in Meinickestr. 10 in Berlin. [...] I offered to organize a Hachscharah in Sweden of a similar kind to Denmark. Collaboration was agreed. Hehalutz would select suitable young people and be responsible for that, after 1 1/2 years of training, they would leave for Palestine or another country.[28]

According to Emil Glück, he himself initiated the hachsharah in Sweden after he alone managed to get the National Board of Health and Welfare to establish what would be called the halutz-quota, which meant that on a trial basis, he was to train 10 young people in agricultural work for 18 months. As the young participants left for Palestine, new candidates were allowed admission within the framework of the quota.[29] However, Perez Leshem (Fritz Lichtenstein), one of the leaders of the German He-Halutz movement, gives a different version of how the collaboration with Emil Glück started. According to Leshem, in the spring of 1933 he traveled to several European countries to explore the possibility of starting and running hachsharah in other countries within the framework of the German He-Halutz. Leshem writes that after meeting with Benjamin Slor in Denmark, on his advice, Leshem went on to Sweden to meet Emil Glück in Helsingborg. They discussed employment and education opportunities in Sweden for the *halutzim* from Germany. Leshem further writes that he found Glück a tireless and willing co-worker who listened to and respected the movement. According to Leshem, Glück later acted as a mediator between He-Halutz and the Jewish community in Stockholm.[30]
Glück's meeting with Perez Leshem is not mentioned in Glück's book. Instead, the role and actions of Glück himself are emphasized; for example, the cover text states that "Glück almost single-handedly built up a Swedish section of the Zionist organization Hehalutz."

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[28] Glück, *På väg till Israel*, 15.
[29] Thor, *Hechaluz – en rörelse i rum och tid,* 143-145.
[30] Leshem, *Strasse zur Rettung,* 30-32.

Glück writes that when the Jewish community in Stockholm learned that he had been granted permission by the National Board of Health and Welfare to educate ten young people from Germany for 18 months as agricultural students, the community contacted him. According to Glück, the Jewish community in Stockholm expressed doubts about a private person being granted permission to bring Jews from Germany to Sweden but nevertheless offered to help. Glück writes that he agreed, and it was decided that a quota of ten people would be handled by him personally. It was also decided that the application documents would be passed on to the National Board of Health and Welfare via the Jewish community in Stockholm.[31]

It is not my aim to in any way diminish Glück's endeavors and the efforts he and his wife, Anna Glück, made (especially in the early years) to find work for and provide for the German-Jewish youth that were granted entry to Sweden through the halutz-quota. Glück was clearly an important actor in the establishment of the halutz-quota and finding work for the first halutzim who arrived in Sweden. Without his help, the He-Halutz may never have had the opportunity to establish a hachsharah in Sweden, but he was never the leader of the movement (although he probably understood himself as such), nor was he ever a member of the movement or considered as a member of the movement by the halutzim.

When reviewing correspondence to and from the movement in Sweden and during interviews with former members of the He-Halutz, it is obvious that they had great respect for Glück and felt gratitude for his endeavors. However, he is never portrayed as a leader or a member of the movement by its members (the halutzim). Although acknowledged as a benefactor, he is always positioned as a "Swede," "Swedish Jew," or "Swedish Zionist" and is thus defined as someone outside the movement by its members. This is also how Alfred Kalter explains it in an interview. He stressed during our conversation that he personally liked Emil Glück very much, but Glück was not part of the movement. According to Kalter, Glück did not understand young people and was therefore regarded as an outsider and a stranger by the members of the He-Halutz. Kalter thus emphasizes during our conversation that Glück did not belong to He-Halutz. He also mentions the continuous power struggle between the community in Stockholm and Glück.

[31] Thor, *Hechaluz – en rörelse i tid och rum*, 143-151.

According to Kalter, Swedish Jews were part of bourgeois society and fearful of increased antisemitism if too many Jewish refugees were allowed to come to Sweden, while the halutzim regarded themselves as the avantgarde who would build up socialism and the new Jewish homeland. Therefore, the Jewish community in Stockholm as well as the community in Malmö were viewed with skepticism by halutzim, according to Kalter.[32] The question of whether Glück was a member of the movement in Sweden or its leader sheds light on perspectives and the experiences of the German Jewish youth that were allowed entry visas to Sweden through the halutz-quota and their identities as halutzim. Further, it highlights the importance of recognizing the refugees as actors in the past and as knowledge producers of the past and of acknowledging their perspectives when writing their history. As pointed out within the research field of Refugee studies standards on the production of knowledge must be strengthened to address a very real gap in the way researchers write about refugees. Working towards changing national narratives about migration, refugees and refugee aid, that often build upon the archives of the states or the aid organizations, it is essential to listen to the voices of the refugees in different materials and let their perspectives and the creation of stories play a more leading role.[33]

In my conversation with Alfred Kalter, it is quite clear that he talks from the position of a young Zionist and socialist rather than a Jewish refugee.

Kalter spoke from the position of a young Zionist during the interview, but during my conversations with other former halutzim there were also those who expressed disappointment with Swedish Jews from a more personal position or a refugee position

> They [the Swedish Jews] didn't seem to consider us to be equal. I asked the community in Malmö to lend me $400 to help my mother to escape from Aachen to America. They told me, "We have enough trouble with the poor people of our own!" Their attitude towards Israel and the

[32] Interview with Alfred Kalter November 3, 1998, interviewed by Malin Thor (Tureby).

[33] See for example Kushner, "Holocaust Testimony, Ethics, and the Problem of Representation," 276-295; Adam Saltsman and Nassim Majidi, "Storytelling in Research with Refugees: On the Promise and Politics of Audibility and Visibility in Participatory Research in Contexts of Forced Migration," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 34, no. 3 (2021): 2522-2538.

> Hehalutz was chilly at the time. But there were exceptions, and as time went by, they changed their attitudes more and more [...].[34]

Many former halutzim express a similar attitude in relation to Swedish Jews and tell stories about how they felt that Swedish Jews did not treat them as equals or in a respectful way. These ambivalent feelings were common among the Jews who escaped the Nazis.[35]

Regardless of how Alfred Kalter and other halutzim perceived and experienced Glück and other representatives of the Jewish minority in Sweden, Glück was nevertheless an important actor, along with the Jewish community in Stockholm and other Jewish communities in Sweden, in the establishment of the halutz-quota and the funding of the He-Halutz activities in Sweden.[36]

Which halutz would be selected to travel to Sweden was decided by the German He-Halutz movement's department of Auslandshachscharah. Toward the end of the 1930s, however, the movement in Germany became increasingly concerned about the increased terror against the Jewish population in Nazi Germany. Therefore, in 1938 and 1939, candidates could no longer be screened in the same way, and as a result, several unconvinced Zionists came to Sweden through the halutz-quota.[37] According to Shalmon, this became a problem for the hachsharah in Sweden, particularly as the Jewish community in Stockholm and the Swedish authorities continued to treat everyone who had come to Sweden through the halutz-quota as a member of the He-Halutz movement.[38] According to Shalmon, representatives from the Jewish community and the Swedish authorities did not

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[34] Interview with NN. In accordance with the interviewee's wish, I do not to name this interviewee.

[35] In 1943, the philosopher Hannah Arendt published the article, "We Refugees," which gives a good description of the emotional unease of the persecuted Jews of Europe. See Hannah Arendt, "We Refugees," in *The Jewish writings. Hannah Arendt*, eds. Jerome Kohn and Ron H. Feldman (New York: Schocken Books, 2007). See also, Thor, "Memories of the Exile" for more quotes from interviews with the former halutzim about their experiences from and views on the Jewish communities in Sweden.

[36] The communities in Gothenburg and Malmö also contributed funding to the He-Halutz in Sweden: See for example Protokoll 1933–1942, Ai:1, Judiska Församlingen i Göteborg. Region- och Stadsarkivet Göteborg med Folkrörelsernas Arkiv, Göteborg.

[37] Thor, *Hechaluz – en rörelse i tid och rum*, 178-187.

[38] Shalmon, "Die Schwedische Hachscharah 1933–1948," 10-14.

understand the activities that the movement in Sweden sought to run. They demanded that both Zionists and non-Zionists (who had been granted entry through the halutz-quota) be managed by the leadership of the He-Halutz in Sweden, which, according to Shalmon, caused many problems and conflicts within the movement.[39] He writes that 59 of the 177 people who came to Sweden through the halutz quota in 1939 left He-Halutz immediately after the arrival.[40] In a contemporary report, however, this was not described as a problem, but as a positive thing because it meant that only righteous members remained in He-Halutz. In addition, an expulsion action was carried out in 1939, when the leadership of the He-Halutz in Sweden (the Mazkirut) decided that all those who had been granted entry visas to Sweden through the halutz-quota but did not identify as Zionists, should be excluded from the movement. Ultimately, therefore, the exclusion process was about He-Halutz opposing being regarded as a refugee organization by the Swedish authorities and Swedish Jews. The decision to exclude non-Zionists from the movement can thus be understood as a move by He-Halutz both to secure the ideological and educational quality and goal of the hachsharah as well as to present itself as a pioneer movement, not an organization for refugees.[41]

Stories about Kibbutz Svartingstorp

Swedish Jews' lack of knowledge and understanding of the activities of He-Halutz and its commitment to Zionism is also a recurring theme in the correspondence between the He-Halutz in Sweden and the Zionist institutions in Palestine/Israel.[42] In documents from the movement, both the community in Stockholm and the Swedish authorities refer to He-Halutz members primarily as transmigrants or refugees, while they themselves maintained an identity and acted

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid., 27-28; Thor, *Hechaluz – en rörelse i tid och rum*, 189.

[41] Thor, *Hechaluz – en rörelse i tid och rum*, 178-244.

[42] The section about Kibbutz Svartingstorp has previously been published in Swedish in Thor, *Hechaluz – en rörelse i tid och rum*, 156-177; Thor, "Kibbutz Svartingstorp 1936–1940," in *Kibbutzer i Sverige*, ed. Thor, 67-79.

from the position of working-class Zionist pioneers on their way to Palestine.[43] A distinct example of how this [misunderstanding] manifested itself are the many conflicts about kibbutz Svartingstorp.

At the beginning of 1936, one of the leaders of the He-Halutz in Germany, Georg Josephtal, visited Sweden to discuss the possibility of expanding and improving the hachsharah in Sweden, among other things, through the establishment of a kibbutz. The He-Halutz leadership in Germany preferred this form of education, as it best corresponded to future life in Palestine. Given that the movement in Germany did not have any resources available, the implementation of the project depended on finding benefactors in Sweden willing to finance it. Emil Glück began the search for donors for the purchase of a suitable farm. Through his contacts with the Jewish community in Stockholm, Glück learned that Professor Eli Heckscher's mother, Rosa Heckscher, wanted to donate a large amount of money to help Jewish refugees from Germany. With the help of these funds, the Foundation for Agricultural Education (Stiftelsen för Lantbruksutbildning) was founded and the Svartingstorp farm in southern Sweden was purchased.[44]

On November 1, 1936, kibbutz Svartingstorp opened. The first group consisted of eight boys and three girls led by Hardy Winter. Glück describes Hardy Winter as an older and experienced halutz who had been sent to the hachsharah in Sweden to lead the workers.[45] I met Hardy Winter at his home in kibbutz Dafna in Israel in November 2000. Winter was 89 years old when we first met. He told me that he was not at all an experienced halutz and that he had never been a member of He-Halutz or any other Zionist youth movement in Germany. During our conversations, Winter told me that he was a socialist and anti-Nazi and a member of the youth movement Kameraden in Germany. His anti-Nazi and socialist activities were one of the reasons why he was compelled to leave Germany quickly. After being severely beaten up by Nazis, he went to the He-Halutz office in Berlin and asked for help to leave Germany. He knew that they were arranging visas for young people who wanted to emigrate. His girlfriend had already left Germany

[43] Thor, *Hechaluz – en rörelse i tid och rum,* 172.

[44] Ibid., 156-177; Thor, "Kibbutz Svartingstorp 1936–1940," 67-79.

[45] Glück, *På väg till Israel*, 20-23.

and traveled to Sweden. Winter therefore explained to He-Halutz that he was happy to travel to Sweden while waiting for an aliyah-certificate to Palestine.[46]
He was thus not an experienced halutz, as Glück claims, but had some life experience, a socialist conviction, and was slightly older, at age 24, than the other young people sent from Germany to Sweden. Hardy Winter estimates that there were about 15-20 He-Halutz members in Sweden upon his arrival in the autumn of 1936. Although not an experienced halutz, Winter became one of the leaders of the hachsharah and kibbutz Svartingstorp when it opened in November 1936.
We can read about the first days at the kibbutz from an unknown diary writer that published his diary entries from the first weeks of the kibbutz in the movement's journal *Darkenu* (Our Way). This is what the diarist wrote about the first day at the kibbutz: "*Sunday. November 1, 1936.* There's nothing here. No table, no bed, nothing to eat. Just empty rooms. And a barn that gives a comfortless impression, which is very dilapidated and neglected."[47]
The diarist's first impression of what was going to be his home for the near future was far from positive, and the negative emotions continued:

> *Monday. November 2, 1936.* Our first working day started at 6:00 with the cows in the barn. There was apparently several weeks of dung, and the cleaning took several hours. Cleaning the entire complex will take several weeks. We can only carry out the most necessary work, [and] as we do not yet have any tools, the work is more than enough for us three boys. Our two women in the kitchen prepared a grandiose meal for dinner today. Tomorrow, we will start with the beet harvest and the plowing. Our four horses are old but can run. The cows are thin and give very little milk, the pigs sink into their own dung, and this dirt found in this stable is worse than can be expressed in words. The hens are slender and neglected. Will we later be able to tell you about our great success? Maybe additional *chawerim* will join us soon, then we'll get ahead faster with the work.[48]

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[46] Interview with Hardy Winter, November 16, 2000, interviewed by Malin Thor (Tureby).
[47] "Aus den ersten Tagen des Kibuz. Tagebuch Auszuge Svartingstorp," in *Darkenu* 2 (August, 1937). The authors' translation from German, Z8/4-25, Ghetto Fighters House Archive, Western Galilee. See also Thor, *Hechaluz – en rörelse i tid och rum*, 156-158, for a translation and discussion of the diary in Swedish.
[48] "Aus den ersten Tagen des Kibuz."

The diarist's negative attitude seems to turn to acceptance during the first and second weeks at the kibbutz, as he wrote that he began to feel at home in the kibbutz and became accustomed to all the awkwardness. They had also found the first two eggs in the hen house: on Wednesday, November 18, 1936 (the last day described in *Darkenu*), the diarist writes,

> The external image has changed, a little bit, for the better. The manure stack is gone. The farm and the stables are clean, and our cows are freed from their thick dung layers. In the stable, there are new boxes, the cobwebs are gone from the walls, and the horses are fine. In the house, the windows have curtains, and the house has become convivial and more comfortable.[49]

Svartingstorp was a dilapidated farm but nevertheless quickly developed into the heart of the movement. In addition to Hardy Winter, a Swedish agronomist hired by the Jewish community in Stockholm was on the kibbutz to lead the work. However, the community in Stockholm and the Swedish agronomist considered Svartingstorp to be primarily an agricultural school and not a kibbutz, and this resulted in many problems and conflicts at Svartingstorp.

Contemporary documents authored by members of the hachsharah in Sweden state that Svartingstorp's main flaw was that any attempt at independence and responsibility by both the management and the halutzim was quashed. A proposal to have a closed *chewra* (community) based on collective values was rejected as well as any connection at all to He-Halutz. A request from the halutzim for self-management had also been rejected. The only authority in the house would be Swedish agronomist Enblom and his wife, as representatives of the foundation in Stockholm.[50]

The halutzim's dissatisfaction with the Swedish agronomist's management of the kibbutz led them to write to representatives of the movement in Eretz Israel asking for help. They requested that the Histadrut should send an experienced *schaliach*

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[49] Ibid.

[50] Thor, *Hechaluz – en rörelse i tid och rum*, 158-160.

who could take over the leadership of kibbutz Svartingstorp.[51] In addition to the members' request for a leader to be sent from Eretz Israel to organize the work, discussions about Svartingstorp included in the movement's journal, *Darkenu*, and revelations/comments from contemporary interviews indicate that kibbutz Svartingstorp was important for the members in Sweden.[52]

However, economic reasons ultimately led to the closure of the operations at Svartingstorp. In the autumn of 1939, the economy was so bad that the halutzim had to be sent to work on different farms. As a result, kibbutz Svartingstorp was closed.

Emil Glück writes in his book that Svartingstorp, despite all the setbacks and difficulties, was an asset, as it brought together refugees and Swedish Jews. The constant connection between Svartingstorp and the Jewish community in Stockholm made the leaders of the community aware of the young refugees from Germany and their goals and needs.[53]

When I interviewed former members of the He-Halutz in Sweden and Israel in the late 1990s and early 2000s, many had stories to tell about Svartingstorp. A consistent feature of the former members' stories about Svartingstorp are funny anecdotes about the Swedish agronomist's incompetence and his inability—as well as that of other representatives from the Jewish community in Stockholm—to accept their Zionist way of life. However, first and foremost, the former members of the He-Halutz recall the importance of being with other young people in the same situation as themselves and the sense of belonging and security the collective living at kibbutz Svartingstorp offered them in a new country, on their own without their families. It was thus not only for ideological reasons that Svartingstorp was important for some of the members of the He-Halutz. Werner Braun, who lived on kibbutz Svartingstorp for a couple of years, explained it this way to me when we met at his home in Jerusalem in the early 2000s:

> Werner: [...] I was a regular member of the Hehalutz. I was supposed to go to a kibbutz [in Palestine]. But I never had any intention of going. I'm

[51] Berthold Rotschild/Kibbutz Svartingstorp, Letter to Fritz Lichtenstein, Mazkiruth Hakibbuz, Ein Charod, October 6, 1937, File: 2/11/59, Yad Tabenkin Archives, Ramat Ef'al.

[52] Thor, *Hechaluz – en rörelse i tid och rum*, 161.

[53] Glück, *På väg till Israel*, 26.

> too much of an individualist. I couldn't go to a kibbutz, but I didn't tell them.
> Malin: Did you ever think about leaving the Hehalutz in Sweden and live on your own?
> Werner: No, there was no question about that. I could only have been on my own if I had left the Hehalutz. But as a member of the Hehalutz ... no, I never thought about it. No, I didn't want to be alone [in Sweden]; I wanted to be alone in Israel.[54]

The Reception and Integration of the *Halutzim* from the *Hachsharah* in Denmark in 1943

The rescue of Danish Jews to Sweden in October 1943 is a well-known event in the history of the Holocaust. The rescue has been researched, re-told and exhibited as a unique story for the reason that over 90% of the circa 8,000 Jews (6,000 Danish citizens and about 1,500 refugees or stateless persons) in Denmark survived the Nazi persecution.[55] Yet, as pointed out by Danish historian Sofie Lene Bak, the historiography is almost limited to the Danish rescuers and the events which occurred in the autumn of 1943, neglecting the Danish Jews experiences of flight and exile.[56] From a Swedish perspective it has recently been argued that almost no research about the reception of the Danish Jews and the their stay in Sweden exist.[57] In this section I will first and foremost focus on the He-Halutz perspective on the arrival and reception of the halutzim from the Danish hachsharah and on

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[54] Interview with Werner Braun, January 9, 2001, interviewed by Malin Thor (Tureby).

[55] See for example Leni Yahil, *Hatsalat ha-Yehudim be-Denyah: demokratyah she-'amdah ba-mivḥan* (Jerusalem: Hotsa'at Sefarim 'a. sh. Y. L. Magnes, ha-Universiṭah ha-'ivrit, 1966) (see also Yahil 1967 for a Danish translation of the book and Yahil 1969 for an English translation of the same book); Therkel Stræde, *October 1943*: *The rescue of the Danish Jews from annihilation* (Köpenhamn: Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1993); See also other memorial institutions' websites for examples of how the rescue of the Danish Jews is narrated: accessed June 22, 2022, http://www.yadvashem.org/righteous/stories/the-rescue-of-denmark-jews.html.

[56] Sofie Lene Bak, "Repatriation and restitution of Holocaust victims in post-war Denmark," *Jewish Studies in the Nordic Countries Today* 27 (2016): 134-152.

[57] Klas Åmark, *Förintelsen och antisemitism – en kartläggning av svensk forskning* (Stockholm: Vetenskapsrådet, 2021), 56.

how the refugees/halutzim from Germany were helping other refugees/halutzim when they were forced to move a second time.[58]

In October 1943, the members of the He-Halutz and the Jugendaliyah in Denmark fled to Sweden together with the Danish Jews.[59] Thereafter, the number of halutzim in Sweden doubled. In total, 364 persons from the hachsharah in Denmark (223 men, 96 women, and 35 children) came to Sweden and were integrated into the hachsharah. Twenty-eight He-Halutz members and 40 Jugendaliyah-children from Denmark were arrested by the Nazis in Denmark and deported to Theresienstadt. All of them survived and were rescued to Sweden later in the spring of 1945. Two members of the Danish hachsharah drowned during their escape to Sweden in 1943, and five people are still missing—no one knows what happened to them, according to Shalmon.[60]

The He-Halutz in Sweden informed the Zionist institutions in Palestine of the arrival of the halutzim from Denmark.[61] Shalmon writes that He-Halutz decided to create a transitional camp to place the Danish members in "normal working conditions" as soon as possible. The camp was established in Bjärnum, north of Hässleholm (where the Mazkirut [the secretariat] had its office).[62] The members of the Youth Aliyah were taken care of by a Youth Aliyah group who were at a kibbutz in Falun and by a Bachad[63] group living at a kibbutz in Norrköping. The doubling of its members resulted in several organizational challenges for the movement. Mazkirut was given new duties and needed to be expanded to carry out all the necessary tasks. One person was put in charge of getting jobs for the halutzim from Denmark and handled all negotiations with the authorities. Another person became responsible for the connection between the Mazkirut and

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[58] The section on the reception of the halutzim from Denmark has been published previously in Swedish in Thor Tureby, "Pionjärer, flyktingar och överlevande," 452-455.

[59] For stories about the Danish hachscharah see Jørgen Hæstrup, *Dengang in Denmark. Jødisk ungdom på træk 1932–1945* (Odense: Odense universitetsforlag, 1982).

[60] Shalmon, "Die Schwedische Hachscharah 1933–1948," 92.

[61] Michael Wächter (Hechaluz i Sverige) Telegram to Histadrut, October 15, 1943. IV 209-4-159, Lavon Institute Labour Archives, Tel Aviv.

[62] Shalmon, "Die Schwedische Hachscharah 1933–1948," 92.

[63] Brit Chalutzim Dati'im (The Alliance of Religious Pioneers, short form: Bachad) was founded in Germany in 1928. He-Halutz and Bachad cooperated in Sweden. Bachad was organizationally subsumed under the He-Halutz in Sweden but maintained its cultural autonomy.

the Danish members of the Bjärnum camp.[64] Shalmon's writings about the reception of the halutzim from Denmark is written from an administrative point of view: the focus is on how the halutzim in Sweden overcame the challenges in integrating the halutzim from Denmark into the movement. He does not relate to or write anything about the ongoing war and the threatening situation for the persecuted Jews of Europe. The encounter with the halutzim from Denmark is not framed or described as an encounter with persons that once again are fleeing from the Nazis but as a meeting with like-minded young people like himself, an encounter with pioneers, on their way to the Jewish homeland in Palestine. Hans Kaufmann, who belonged to a Youth Aliyah group in Denmark, and was among the first who managed to flee to Sweden narrates about his flight and reception in Sweden in a similar way in a written life story:

> On the first day we met people from Hechaluz in Sweden [...]. They looked among the refugees for young people who belonged to the Zionist youth organizations. What a wonderful feeling! Less than 24 hours after our arrival, we were taken care of by Jews, with the same commitment, ideology and goal as us.[65]

In neither Schalmon's nor Kaufman's accounts are the events in Europe at the center of the narrative. This generally also applies to materials that were created within the framework of the movement in Sweden. Journals and meeting minutes contain few or no reports on the war or the threatening situation in Europe. On the other hand, the situation in the Middle East and especially in the Yishuv and in the kibbutz movement and how the British Mandate in Palestine made it hard for the members in Sweden to make aliyah when they were ready was often discussed in detail. The problems with too few certificates and no possibility to make aliyah was continually discussed within the movement in Sweden. After the Danish Jews' flight to Sweden, Eva Warburg, who organized the activities of the Youth Aliyah in Sweden, wrote a personal letter to the Head of the immigration department of the Jewish Agency, Elijahu Dobkin, appealing for 400 certificates

[64] Shalmon, "Die Schwedische Hachscharah 1933–1948," 93.

[65] Hans Kaufmann, "Livet på Kibbutz Hälsinggården," in *Kibbutzer i Sverige,* ed. Thor Tureby, 13-14. Author's translation of quote to English from Swedish.

for those who had fled from Denmark to Sweden.[66] In the letter, she highlighted that these children and young people had been forced to flee for their lives for the second or third time. She also argued that the young people in Sweden could be an asset to Eretz Israel, as they were both mentally and physically strong due to their healthy lifestyle in Scandinavia over the years.[67] However, the requested aliyah-certificates were still not available at that time. In my meetings with former halutzim, however, not all of them saw the small chances of achieving aliyah-certificates as a problem. Otto Schwarz, who decided to stay in Sweden after the war, told me that he and the group of halutzim that he lived together with in Sweden just laughed whenever aliyah was discussed at meetings, because they didn't have any "illusions" that they would ever be able to travel to Palestine.[68]

In early November 1943, the camp in Bjärnum was closed. Shalmon proudly writes in his history of the He-Halutz that it was the first refugee and transit camp for Danish refugees in Sweden to be dismantled. He points out that the He-Halutz effectively and in solidarity took care of and integrated the halutzim from Denmark into the Swedish movement.[69] However, Salmon also writes about how the arrival and integration of "the Danes" was far from trouble-free. Several of them had fled in haste and had not brought any clothes or other personal belongings with them, and few had any money. The He-Halutz in Sweden thus decided that all its members would donate whatever salary they had as farmworkers to the newcomers. As a result, all the He-Halutz members waived their October salary in 1943 in support for the Danish halutzim.[70] Shalmon's narrative also illustrates that some of the members of the He-Halutz were active in

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[66] Eva Warburg's efforts during the Holocaust have unfortunately not yet been researched to the extent that they deserve. She was a key person in the organization of the Jugendaliyah in Sweden. She also helped save children from Denmark and Lithuania to Sweden and organized several *alijot* for children in Sweden. See Interview with Eva Warburg November 6, 2001, interviewed by Malin Thor (Tureby). See also Anne E. Dünzelmann, *... keine normale Reise: Eva Warburg und die Kinder/Jugendalijah in Schweden* (Norderstedt: Books on Demand, 2017).

[67] Eva Warburg, Letter to Elijahu Dobkin, Jewish Agency, Jerusalem, November 23, 1943, File S6/3620, Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem; Thor Tureby, "Pionjärer, flyktingar och överlevande," 453.

[68] Interview with Otto Schwarz, November 6, 2002, interviewed by Malin Thor (Tureby).

[69] Shalmon, "Die Schwedische Hachscharah 1933–1948," 93.

[70] Ibid., 94-96.

the reception of the refugees from Denmark, and how in 1943 they acted like and regarded themselves as refugee helpers rather than as refugees.[71]

It was not only in relation to the Danish halutzim that the He-Halutz members in Sweden showed agency by helping their less fortunate comrades in Europe that were on hachsharah in countries occupied by the Nazis. Another similar event took place in the first months of the war. After Nazi Germany's attack on Poland, several halutzim who had been on hachsharah there fled by foot to Vilnius. In early November 1939, He-Halutz in Sweden received a letter from Arjeh Golani, who was the leader of this group. The letter describes the situation for the halutzim in eastern Europe, and Golani wrote, among other things, that over 500 members lived on the *hachscharahkibbutz* Schecharia.[72] Many of them had fled on foot from other places and owned no more than the clothes they were wearing. Golani therefore asked the He-Halutz in Sweden to arrange a fundraising for the benefit of the comrades in Vilnius.[73] The He-Halutz in Sweden agreed, and clothes were collected and sent to their comrades in Lithuania. In addition, a plan was drawn up to temporarily transfer 300 of the halutzim who were in Vilnius to Sweden. The idea was that they would be transferred to Sweden and wait in security for certificates and a possible travel route to Palestine. However, problems of all kinds—failure to find transport from Lithuania to Sweden, high costs for the transfer to Sweden, and the question of who would guarantee their livelihood in Sweden—could not be solved. Therefore, the plan never materialized. However, the majority of German halutzim in Vilnius would later manage to get to Palestine by traveling across the Soviet Union.[74]

The He-Halutz in Sweden continued to assist detained members in Europe throughout the war, including through monthly payments to Nathan Schwalb at the He-Halutz Merkaz Olami based in Geneva, Switzerland. Schwalb conveyed

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[71] Thor Tureby, "Pionjärer, flyktingar, överlevande," 453-454.

[72] Akiba Eger (Hechaluz i Sverige) Letter to Mazkiruth Hakibbutz Hameuchad, Tel Aviv, November 2, 1939, File Z8/4-34, Ghetto Fighters House Archive, Western Galilee. A copy of the letter was also sent to; Waad Hapoel schel Hahistadruth, Mazkiruth Lemaaraw Europe, Pino Ginsburg and Uri Koch in Amsterdam, Chanan Reichmann in Copenhagen, and Elijahu Dobkin in Tel Aviv.

[73] Arjeh Golani, Riga, Letter to Den Chawerim in Schweden, November 8, 1939, File Z8/4-34, Ghetto Fighters House Archive, Western Galilee.

[74] "Abschrift. Aus einem Brief von Akiba Eger" November 19, 1939, File Z8/4-34, Ghetto Fighters House Archive, Western Galilee; Shalmon, "Die Schwedische Hachscharah 1933–1948," 32-33.

letters, packages, and financial contributions to members who had been imprisoned by the Nazis in Europe. He also served as a liaison between He-Halutz in Sweden and the Zionist institutions in Palestine and conveyed letters to family and friends in Palestine.[75] The He-Halutz in Sweden also sent food and clothing packages via the Red Cross to the Danish halutzim who failed to escape to Sweden and were deported to Theresienstadt. All of them survived and came to Sweden together with thousands of other people who were liberated from Nazi concentration camps in the spring of 1945. Thus, more and more of the movement's and its members' time and incomes went to helping the survivors who arrived in Sweden during the spring and summer of 1945.[76]

The Reception and Integration of the Survivors

During the spring and summer of 1945 as many as 31,000 survivors arrived in Sweden via two "rescue and relief" operations in 1945: the Red Cross "White Buses" in the spring and the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) "White Boats" in the summer.[77]

Seew Shalmon writes that, of the approximately 12,000 Jews rescued to Sweden from the concentration camps in the spring and summer of 1945, more than 3,000 immediately joined the He-Halutz. According to his statement, many of the "old" members were also hired as counselors and social workers to take care of the new arrivals. The majority of the movement's members lived and worked in Southern Sweden, where many of the survivors first arrived. Therefore, in many cases, a representative of He-Halutz was the first to meet the survivors upon their arrival in Sweden.[78]

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[75] Thor, *Hechaluz – en rörelse i tid och rum*, 308-313.

[76] Thor Tureby, "Pionjärer, flyktingar och överlevande," 455.

[77] Olsson, *På tröskeln till folkhemmet*; Sune Persson, "*Vi åker till Sverige." De vita bussarna 1945* (Rimbo: Fischer & Co, 2002); Roman Wroblewski, *The Liberated 1945: White Boat Mission from Bergen-Belsen to Sweden* (Stockholm: Swedish Holocaust Memorial Association – SHMA, 2020). This section about the reception and integration of the Survivors has previously been published in Swedish in Thor Tureby, "Pionjärer, flyktingar och överlevande," 455-462.

[78] Shalmon. "Die Schwedische Hachscharah 1933–1948," 139.

In 1946, the He-Halutz had more than 3,200 registered members. Of these, about 300 were so-called old *haverim* and 2,900 were new arrivals. In addition, about 1,000 people registered in the Bachad (the religious movement). Shalmon writes that, about 4,000 new members of Bachad and He-Halutz had emigrated to Palestine/Israel by the end of 1949.[79]

Shalmon's account was written a few years after the arrival of the survivors, but it fits well with other accounts that are closer in time or that describe the events there and then. In May 1945, for example, Hans Wellisch wrote to the Jewish Agency in Palestine that thousands of survivors had arrived in Sweden from the camps. According to Wellisch, roughly 4,000 of them were Jews and the majority were women. Wellisch writes that He-Halutz will do everything to help the women and to stay in touch with the new members. He also promises to send lists of the women who join the He-Halutz movement in Sweden. In the letter, Wellisch also announces that He-Halutz has compiled and published a newsletter with an overview of the most important Jewish and Zionist events that have occurred in recent years. The newsletter was distributed to all camps housing Jewish survivors. Wellisch also explains that He-Halutz plans to continue to regularly convey news and information to the survivors (referred to as "the women," as most of the survivors that came to Sweden were women) in some form of publication.[80] He-Halutz had also distributed the self-produced magazine *Hapoel* (The Worker) in all the camps and Wellisch reports that "all *chaverot* (female members) liked it very much." He also asks the movement in Palestine to send literature, books, and newspapers, as several of the new members speak Hebrew fluently.[81]

Later, at the request of the Zionist institutions in Palestine, He-Halutz would also make lists of the survivors in Sweden. Such lists of new, excluded, or departed members were continuously compiled and sent to various Zionist institutions in Palestine/Israel.[82]

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[79] Ibid., 187.

[80] Hans Wellisch (Hechaluz i Sverige) letter to B. Ben Shalom, Jewish Agency's Youth Department in Jerusalem May 22, 1945, File S32/943, Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem.

[81] Hans Wellisch (Hechaluz i Sverige) letter to B. Ben Shalom, Jewish Agency's Youth Department, May 5, 1945, File S32/943, Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem.

[82] See for example Letter to He-Halutz in Sweden from Jewish Agency"s Youth Department', August 8, 1945, File S32/943; Liste der Chawerim des Hechaluz in Schweden. Nach dem Stande vom 15. October 1945; Nachtragsliste No. 1 Zur Liste der Chawerim des Hechaluz vom 15.10.45 12/12

In early August 1945, another detailed report "Memorandum on the present and future tasks of the Swedish He-Halutz movement among the refugees who have come to Sweden" was sent to the World Jewish Congress Relief and Rehabilitation Department in Stockholm. The report was written in English (otherwise German, and to some extent Hebrew, were mainly used by the movement in Sweden and in various communications with Zionist institutions). This report also mentions that two people from He-Halutz immediately traveled to Malmö to meet the survivors in the reception camps arranged for them by the Swedish authorities. This report describes in detail the work carried out by He-Halutz for the survivors. For example, it describes how a He-Halutz member visited the camps as often as possible but given that there were about 40 camps in Sweden, each camp could not be visited more than once a month. Furthermore, the report states that the He-Halutz office responded to 50-60 letters daily from the camps, which resulted in large postage expenses. I have not found any of these letters from the survivors during my research in the Swedish or Israeli archives. However, there are traces of these letters in the form of requests to Merkaz Olami, Histadrut, and other Zionist institutions from He-Halutz asking for information, mainly about missing relatives, on behalf of the survivors.[83] During an interview, Ofra Lustgarten told me that she wrote to the He-Halutz when the doctors at the hospital told her that she was rehabilitated and healthy enough to leave. She asked He-Halutz (she got the address from the hospital) what to do as she did not want to be alone in Sweden. The He-Halutz replied to her and sent her a train ticket to Norrköping. In Norrköping she lived together with a group of other female survivors who called themselves Kutzah Shahar. They worked at a factory during the day and at

1945; Nachtragsliste No 3 Liste der Chawerim des Hechaluz vom 15.10.45, March 30, 1946, S6/2107, Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem; List of new haverim 12/12 1945 (Attachment in letter to Nathan Schwalb, Merkaz Olami Geneva December 13 1945, File III 37A-39B, Lavon Archives, Tel Aviv; List of haverim in Sweden October 15, 1945 and List of Jewish Women in the camp Kjesater-Vingåker/Sweden, File IV-209-4-159, Lavon Archives, Tel Aviv.

[83] He-Halutz in Sweden Telegram to Histadrut June 9, 1945; Histadrut Telegram to He-Halutz in Sweden July 10, 1945; He-Halutz in Sweden Letters to Histadrut Haovdim October 16, 1945 and October 17, 1945; He-Halutz in Sweden Letters to Nathan Schwalb, Geneva September 18, 1945; October 25, 1945; Nathan Schwalb letters to He-Halutz in Sweden October 9, 1945; October 17, 1945; October 25, 1945; November 1, 1945; November 2, 1945; March 14, 1946; March 26, 1946, File III 37A-39 B, Lavon Archives, Tel Aviv.

night and on Sundays studied Hebrew and prepared themselves for a future life in Israel.[84]

Educational work among the survivors is also described in the report from August 1945. According to the report, most of the women survivors wanted to form so-called *plugot* (working groups) to live and work together. Some had joined already existing He-Halutz centers where they lived and worked together with the "old" halutzim, and others chose to stay in the camps while waiting for housing and work. The report states that the survivors (referred to as "the liberated" in the report) want to learn English and Hebrew and that many of them were taken to the German camps when they were 11-12 years old, which is why they lacked education. The report adds that although the Swedish state will offer education for these young girls, they will also need to be educated in Jewish and Zionist topics. However, the Swedish He-Halutz movement emphasized that it would not be able to offer this training without financial support. Until that point, all the work done by the He-Halutz (the extra office work, the visits to the camps, and the publication of the newspaper) were financed by a voluntary tax imposed on the members of the movement and through 1,000 Swedish crowns that constituted the movement's emergency cash. However, the funds had been exhausted, and Hans Wellisch wrote to the World Jewish Congress to inform them that for the first time in the history of the Swedish He-Halutz movement, the He-Halutz cannot see how they can continue their work either among their old members or among "the refugees."[85] Therefore, he asks the World Jewish Congress for more funding for the work carried out by He-Halutz with the survivors, or with the refugees as Wellisch calls them.

In Shalmon's writings and the contemporary reports from the movement in Sweden to various Zionist institutions in Europe and the Yishuv, we can hardly hear or see the survivors (although at the time they formed the majority of the movement's members). In the report referred to here, Wellisch is describing what He-Halutz is doing for the survivors. However, many of the survivors were

[84] Interview with Ofra Lustgarten, February 5, 2001, interviewed by Malin Thor (Tureby).

[85] "Memorandum on the present and future tasks of the Swedish Hechaluz movement among the refugees who have come to Sweden," August 5, 1945 addressed to The World Jewish Congress, File III 37A-39B. See also Hans Wellish (Hechaluz i Sverige) letter to Eliahu Dobkin, Immigration Department, Jewish Agency, September 14, 1945, where Wellish writes about his request to the WJC for funding, File S6/2107, Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem.

Zionists before the Holocaust. During an interview with Dwora Henefeld, she told me that she belonged to a Zionist youth movement, that her family was Zionist and that she learned how to speak and read Hebrew in school before the Holocaust. When she was rescued to Sweden in 1945, she came to the refugee camp of Doverstorp, where she met members of the He-Halutz movement that visited the camp. According to Dwora, the members of He-Halutz were the only persons in Sweden who tried to understand what she and the other survivors had been through and that was why she joined the movement. According to her, the representatives from He-Halutz were very pleased when they understood that she could speak Hebrew. After some time, she started to work as a teacher of Hebrew at a school for girls of 14-19 years.[86] Dwora's story illuminates how camp survivors were not only helped by He-Halutz but how they also became members of and contributed to the movement.

In September 1945, Wellisch wrote another report on the Swedish He-Halutz work with the survivors. He writes that, since his last report, more refugees have been transported to Sweden, of whom about 8,000 were Jews. Compared with previous arrivals, there were more men in this group than ever before. According to Wellisch, He-Halutz and other Jewish organizations were better prepared for the arrival of this group, and eight members from He-Halutz helped with their reception, for example, by registering the new arrivals. The He-Halutz members doing the registration also asked all the refugees they spoke to if they were former He-Halutz members and/or if they would like to join the movement in Sweden.[87] The greatest challenge for the leadership of the He-Halutz, according to Shalmon, was to determine which of the new members seriously wanted to become a halutz and really intended to make aliyah. He writes that several of the new arrivals also registered as members of other associations and organizations and signed up to emigration lists to other countries to ensure they had somewhere to go after their rehabilitation in Sweden. It was therefore crucial for the He-Halutz to investigate who was truly a convinced Zionist or not. The approximately 300 "old" members were firmly determined to continue their Zionist work and convinced that the

[86] Interview with Dwora Henefeld, January 22, 2001, interviewed by Malin Thor (Tureby).

[87] To all Merkasej Hechaluz. Report on the Swedish Hechaluz movement's activities during the last months, especially among refugees, November 12, 1945, File Z8/4-51, Ghetto Fighters House Archive, Western Galilee.

new members would also be assigned to work (as soon as they were healthy and strong enough) and pursue cultural work to prepare for life in Eretz Israel. He-Halutz thus did not abandon its main principles as a educational and ideological movement. The movement's goal of educating young people into a Hebrew working life in the Jewish homeland was also set at a meeting (*Moezah*) that took place in the autumn of 1946, where 3,200 members were represented by 82 delegates from different parts of Sweden. However, the massive influx of members meant that more money and more people were needed to lead the ideological schooling and cultural work. Some of the survivors who came to Sweden were experienced halutzim and able to help with the Zionist work.[88] Several of the new arrivals were also elected to the Mazkirut and the Merkas during the meeting.[89] The He-Halutz in Sweden also requested urgent support from the Zionist leadership in Palestine. They asked for several *schlichim* (emissaries from the Zionist movement in Palestine/Israel to come to Sweden and lead the work and for more certificates to be immediately sent for the halutzim in Sweden.[90] The demand for aliyah-certificates was a constant feature in the correspondence with the Zionist institutions in Palestine. The He-Halutz asked for more certificates only a few days after the arrival of the first transport of survivors: "Hundreds Polish women Zionists arrived arrived [sic] Sweden last days mostly pioneers Please inform Histadrut stop Immediate immigration Palestine needed confirm cable Hechaluz Wellish."[91]

As in the autumn of 1943 when the arrival of Danish halutzim was used as an argument to get more certificates, the telegram emphasizes that this is not only for survivors in need of aid but also for Zionist pioneers whose arrival will benefit the country. However, in a letter from autumn 1945, Wellisch admits that few of the new members are experienced Zionists and that few had been on hachsharah before being deported to the concentration camps. He asks the leadership in Palestine for advice on how to distribute certificates for He-Halutz in Sweden.

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[88] *Hapoel* 2, no. 9 (September, 1946), 3-6, File S6/2107, Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem; Shalmon, "Die Schwedische Hachscharah 1933–1948," 141.

[89] *Hapoel* 2, no. 9 (September, 1946), 6, File S6/2107, Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem.

[90] Hechaluz i Sverige letter to Pinhas Lubianiker, Histadrut September 14, 1945, File S6/2107, Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem.

[91] Hechaluz i Sverige, Telegram to Jewish Agency, Jerusalem, May 5, 1945, File S25/5230, Central Zionist Archives Jerusalem.

Wellish writes that, on the one hand, there is a large group of experienced halutzim who have been on hachsharah for many years, some of them up to 14 years. They have been waiting for aliyah for countless years, are trained workers, and would be a great asset to the country. On the other hand, Wellisch points out that the situation for the new refugees (the survivors) is very hard, and many of them long to settle in Palestine as soon as possible, even though they are not experienced Zionists.[92]

Chaim Barlas from the Jewish Agency's Immigration Department in Jerusalem visited Sweden at the end of 1945. He went to see the camps and homes where the survivors lived. Barlas also met with representatives of He-Halutz. Shalmon writes that despite Barlas' visit, few aliyah-certificates were assigned for Sweden. Instead, most of the certificates were distributed to survivors living in more difficult conditions in DP-camps in Germany, Austria, or Italy. Shalmon writes in his history of the He-Halutz that there was an understanding within the movement in Sweden that survivors in Central Europe lived in worse conditions compared to the survivors who had arrived in Sweden. Nevertheless, he stresses that conditions in Sweden, especially for the women, were difficult. They had, according to Shalmon, both mental and spiritual problems that could not heal or fully recover in a place where they did not understand the local language. The women also constantly felt anxiety about the threat of being repatriated to their so-called home countries. As pointed out in the introduction of this article, Peter Gatrell stresses the importance of not getting caught up in the different legal definitions and categorizations of "refugees" at different times and in different contexts when writing the history of refugees. However, as the example of the anxious women shows, categorizations do matter and affect people's experiences, lives and histories. The survivors that arrived in Sweden via two "rescue and relief" operations in 1945—the Red Cross "White Buses" in the spring and the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) "White Boats" in the summer of 1945—were not categorized as refugees by the Swedish state, but as "repatriandi." The category repatriandi meant that the Swedish state had no other plans for the survivors other than their return to their home countries as soon as

[92] Hechaluz i Sverige letter to Jewish Agency's Immigration Department (Elijahu Dobkin) September 9, 1945, File S6/2107, Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem.

they were rehabilitated back to a normal life.[93] Shalmon writes in his manuscript that the longstanding He-Halutz members were fully aware that the survivors were anxious about their status as repatriandi and that they could not live a so-called normal life in Sweden. Also, even if they could stay in Sweden, it would be hard for them to find a Jewish man to marry or to live a Jewish life in Sweden.[94] Also, when corresponding with the Zionist institutions in Palestine/Israel, the leadership of the He-Halutz in Sweden did not present the situation as solely a problem for the women. It was rather communicated as a problem for the Zionist movement itself if it lost these women members, either through marriage to non-Jewish men or by choosing to move to another country, such as the United States.[95] Therefore, aliyah was an urgent solution.

Similar statements can be found in a report from the end of 1947 by Rudolf H. Melitz.[96] He claims in the report that the remaining members of He-Halutz (many of them survivors and women) are displeased with life in Sweden, even though the overall conditions are generally good. The reasons for their dissatisfaction are that there is no Jewish social life or any cultural activities in Sweden. Melitz describes Swedish Jews as fully assimilated and belonging to the wealthier classes and therefore unwilling to socialize with the Jewish refugees. Consequently, the refugees were completely at the mercy of themselves, according to Melitz. Even non-Jewish Swedes were reluctant to socialize with foreigners, which is explained in the report by the common understanding that Swedes generally suffer from a certain shyness. A few Swedish men are reported to have married "refugee girls" [survivors], but these marriages are exceptions. Furthermore, Melitz writes about the lack of housing in the larger cities and the fact that the girls have not learned Swedish because they have always been prepared

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[93] Olsson, *På tröskeln till folkhemmet*, 149-151.

[94] Shalmon, "Die Schwedische Hachscharah 1933–1948," 177.

[95] Ibid.

[96] Rudolf Melitz should have been familiar with the situation in Sweden. In 1945, he organized the establishment of 13 schools for over 800 children rescued to Sweden in 1945. See *Judisk Krönika* 3 (1948), 38. Smedsbo school, that is mentioned in the introduction to this article, where Eli Getreu from the He-Halutz worked between 1946 and1948, was one of these schools. See also Beth Cohen, "Saving Jewish Girls: A Case Study in Lidingö, Sweden" in *Agency and the Holocaust: Essays in Honor of Debórah Dwork*, eds. Thomas Kühne and Mary Jane Rein (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 31-47; Chana (Igell) Mantel, *Lidingo: Memories of the small Swedish haven which 200 girls called "home" after the Holocaust* (Jerusalem: Machon Yachdav, 1998).

to leave Sweden shortly, which is why many of them are unemployed or work in poorly paid jobs where no knowledge of the Swedish language is needed. The report therefore expresses an understanding that, despite the seemingly relatively good overall conditions, especially compared to those in the DP-camps in Europe, these women must be allowed to make aliyah soon.[97]

Shalmon writes that when the State of Israel was proclaimed in 1948, 11 ships from Scandinavia were immediately organized. These were funded by two Jewish humanitarian organizations based in the United States, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC). He does not specify exactly how many people were involved but does state that about 50% of those who left on these ships to make aliyah were members of the He-Halutz.[98] Shalmon also gives figures of how many of those who had come to Sweden through He-Halutz, or who had become members after their arrival in Sweden, went on to make aliyah. According to him, between 1933 and 1941 a total of 190 adults (and 10 children) made aliyah, and another 85 adults (and 20 children) made aliyah between 1945 and 1949. Thus, a total of 275 of the "old" halutzim (490 had been given entrance to Sweden through the halutz-quota) made aliyah. Others emigrated to other countries (65 people), three people had died when Shalmon wrote his history (1949), and 190 chose to stay in Sweden. Of the 320 halutzim who fled to Sweden from Denmark and the 45 halutzim who had been in Denmark but were deported to Theresienstadt and were freed in 1945, approximately 150 people made aliyah, while the rest chose to return to Denmark or stayed in Sweden.[99] Of the approximately 4,000 people who chose to join He-Halutz or Bachad after coming to Sweden as camp survivors, an estimated 2,000 had made aliyah in 1949, according to Shalmon. Therefore, when Shalmon wrote his history, according to him, about 2,400 people who had been members of He-Halutz in Sweden had made aliyah. In the end, the knowledge that 275 members (more than half) of the old halutzim (i.e., those who belonged to the group of 490 people admitted through the halutz-quota between 1933 and 1941) did make aliyah indicates that

97 Rudolf E. Melitz, Report on Sweden, December 12, 1947, File S32/943, Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem.

98 Shalmon, "Die Schwedische Hachscharah 1933–1948," 177.

99 Ibid., 186.

the movement in Sweden never gave up its ideological goals but remained a pioneering and teaching movement throughout the war.

It is hard to say anything precise or specific about the extent to which the encounter and the confrontation with mass extermination and camp survivors' experiences shaped the collective consciousness of the "old" members of He-Halutz. The leadership of the movement were all "old" halutzim and they seldom reflect or narrate about the survivors as survivors, but rather as potential pioneers for the Jewish homeland. In the sources from the movement in Sweden the survivors from the camps or the refugees from Denmark are seldom heard. The story of the He-Halutz in Sweden is rather told as a story about young Jewish people who happened to come to Sweden and lived there, isolated from the events of the world and those of rest of the Jewish people for many years.

Concluding Remarks

By reading the sources from the movement it is hard to conclude when He-Halutz members become aware of the Holocaust and what effect did it have on their own identity. In addition to Shalmon's history, much of the archived materials from the hachsharah and the He-Halutz in Sweden referred to in this text—such as for example the correspondence with various Zionist institutions, meeting protocols, reports and journals—contains discussions on Zionist ideology and (the successful) organization of the movement's activities. The main theme is the Zionist project, not the situation or the war in Europe, which is why the young people at the time are mainly described or positioned as strong and convinced pioneers on their way to the Jewish homeland in Palestine. Very little in this material discusses the threatening situation in Europe or their background in and flight from Germany. Their situation and identity are described through the whole period (1933-1948) as being in exile from the Jewish homeland, not as refugees from their countries of birth, on their run from the Nazi persecutors. The goal for the movement and for its individual members is described as making aliyah and live their future life as halutzim in a kibbutz in the Jewish homeland. The interviews have other recurrent themes, such as, for example, childhood

memories of Germany, the refugee experience, and the loss of parents and other loved ones during the Holocaust:

> I was very young and naïve. I missed my mother. I fell asleep every night on my boyfriend's arm, but it wasn't romantic. I cried and said, "I want my mom. I want my mom." He comforted me. We got married after the war. My mother was murdered in Auschwitz.[100]

The interviews with former halutzim thus make it possible to problematize the "success stories" and the self-image of He-Halutz and the collective halutz identity that emerges from the documents and writings produced within the movement in the 1930s and 1940s. During my conversations with the former halutzim it also became quite clear that they had widely differing perceptions of not only the movement and their role in it, but also of Zionism, Swedish society, the Swedish Jews, and their future life in Palestine/Israel or Sweden. Bearing in mind that the people I interviewed knew that I wanted to meet them to talk about their time in the He-Halutz, relatively few of them, whether interviewed in Sweden or in Israel, relayed their experiences and their lives from this perspective.[101]

Without having to be asked, most of them described their first workplace in Sweden. The first things many of the interviewees called to mind about life in the Swedish countryside in the 1930s and 1940s was the hard, toilsome work in the fields and in the cowsheds, the meager accommodation, and the language problems. Few said anything (at least not until I asked) about Hebrew language tuition, Zionist ideology, meetings, seminars, elections to the leadership of the movement, discussions, and ideological based conflicts within the movement. It is thus not the Zionist identity or the ideological discussions that primarily feature in the former halutzims' stories of life in exile in rural Sweden but rather the material reality and the refugee experience. By placing these young people at the heart of history writing and exploring their perspectives, actions, and experiences, the history of the He-Halutz in Sweden becomes richer, more nuanced, and more multi-faceted. The analysis of various documents and writings from the movement back in the 1930s and 1940s and the stories of the interviewees in the

[100] Interview with Yael Braun, January 17, 2001, interviewed by Malin Thor (Tureby).

[101] Thor, *Hechaluz – en rörelse i tid och rum*, 407-421.

late 1990s and early 2000s illuminate separate, albeit not totally different, versions of the history of the hachsharah and the He-Halutz and their significance for the members in Sweden.[102] In addition, both the documents from the movement that are archived in various archives in Israel and the interviews with the former halutzim demonstrate that they were not only important actors within the framework of the Zionist movement, but also active agents in receiving and helping refugees/halutzim and survivors in Sweden, in both 1943 and 1945. The line between "the one being helped" and "those who help" does not always coincide with who is defined as a refugee by states, other actors or the benefactor of refugees. The history of the hachsharah and the He-Halutz in Sweden serves as an illustrative example of how people who are defined as refugees can be central actors in historical processes, not solely as refugees, but also, at the same time, as refugee helpers, and political subjects with agency. Further, the history of He-Halutz is not *one* story, but the history of several individuals' different experiences, recountings, and writings. The history of the He-Halutz in Sweden and its members is also a part of Holocaust history. The history of the He-Halutz in Sweden depicted here is mainly the history of the Jewish young people who managed to get to Sweden before 1941. It is their voices, perspectives, and experiences—from meeting the refugees/halutzim from Denmark in 1943 and the survivors in 1945—that are mainly described in the sources. It is important to acknowledge that their historical experiences are both quite different from other Jewish refugees/survivors during the same period, but also quite similar. Most importantly their historical experiences are related to the developments during the Holocaust and other Jewish refuges/survivors experiences. Shalmon argues that they lived in Sweden "isolated from the events of the world and the Jewish people for many years." Certainly, they lived quite isolated in a country that was never occupied by the Nazis and they had very few contacts with Swedish Jews. But they were never completely isolated, as Shalmon writes, they were in constant contact with halutzim in other countries and with the Zionist institutions in the Yishuv. Further, the movement and its members in Sweden were important actors in the reception of the Danish Jews in 1943 and of the survivors from the liberated camps in Europe in 1945. The reception and the integration of these two groups not only

[102] Thor, *Hechaluz - en rörelse i tid och rum*, 407-421.

increased the membership of the movement, but also made it into a movement with members with diverse backgrounds and experiences before and during the Holocaust. Finally, although the "old" halutzim were not persecuted again after their arrival in Sweden, they also shared the experience of persecution, of leaving their country of birth, family and friends behind, the experience of anxiety for their own and others safety during the war, and finally sharing the experience of losing the majority of their family, friends and loved ones in the Holocaust. In that way their experiences can be compared to the experiences of other Jewish refugees and survivors during the same period.

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Keywords: He-Halutz, Sweden, Hachsharah, Refugee Studies, History Writing, Holocaust studies

How to quote this article:
Malin Thor Tureby, "Experiencing and Remembering the *Hachsharah*. Documents and Stories from and about the He-Halutz in Sweden," in "Training for *Aliyah*: Young Jews in *Hachsharot* across Europe between the 1930s and late 1940s," eds. Verena Buser and Chiara Renzo, *Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History. Journal of the Fondazione CDEC* 21, no. 1 (2022), DOI: 10.48248/issn.2037-741X/13310

Hachsharah Training Centers in Czechoslovakia and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia

by *Daniela Bartáková*

Abstract

Immediately after the foundation of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, activities, focus groups, bureaucratic structure, and organization of hachsharah *training centers had to change considerably. Chances to emigrate became more and more limited. Since the completion of the* hachsharah *training became a prerequisite for obtaining the emigration certificate, the reorganization of* hachsharah *training centers became a crucial task for Zionists. Various agricultural training centers, vocational training, and requalification courses were established and organized with unprecedented intensity. For these activities, He-Halutz department of the Palestinian Office was responsible, and organized these places mostly on farms and manors of Czech farmers; this became a part of the economic exploitation of the Jews. The paper will analyze changes in age groups, social status of emigration candidates and trainees, reorganization of training camps from the perspective of the Zionist movement as well as temporal changes of Jewish geography in the former territory of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.*

Introduction*

The role and evolution of the *hachsharot* in the First Republic of Czechoslovakia and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia can be traced only with significant difficulties. For the purpose of the study, I tackle the issue in relation to the geopolitical changes that affected this region during the interwar period and the Second World War. I will focus predominantly on the former Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. Although I am aware that Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia also played a crucial role in the shaping of the hachsharot, the region stays somewhat aside for the purpose of this study. Jews' participation in agricultural training in this area developed in parallel with the discourse on (national) Jewish identity, which was deeply affected by the partition of Czechoslovakia and the consequences of the annexation of the Protectorate to Nazi Germany. In the period analyzed in this article, Jews lived in a turbulent time of integration, commitment to the national aspirations of Czechoslovaks and/or Zionists, growing discrimination and exclusion, and eventually ghettoization and deportation. With a certain measure of simplification, the Jews of Czechoslovakia determined and reconfigured their identity and affiliation to Zionism accordingly. Against the backdrop of this complex scenario, I will examine Jews' approach to and participation in the ideological and practical training for *aliyah* and the hachsharot. My analysis will focus primarily on two pioneer youth movements: Tchelet Lavan, which originated from the German romantic movement Wandervogel, and the socialist Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir, which has its origins in Galicia. Drawing on documents from the archives of these two youth movements and the contemporary Jewish press, I will try to reconstruct their ideological, educational, and organizational program in the hachsharot. Intertwining these sources with memoirs and oral testimonies of Holocaust survivors who participated in the hachsharot, this article also sheds light on the impact of Zionist propaganda on young pioneers and the way they perceived their training experience. The article shows that, if initially the hachsharot were perceived as vacation camps, later they were seen as a social and economic lifeline by the young Jews of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. This development was, however, significantly affected by the Second World War.

While historical research has demonstrated that the Zionist project in Czechoslovakia never became a mass Jewish movement, the experiences of the young Jews who joined the hachsharot have not been addressed yet.[1] Thus, this study faces many difficulties. Educational programs and hachsharot were somehow neglected in Czech historiography. Exploring the transformation of hachsharot training centers between the 1930s and the autumn of 1941 provides a more nuanced and deeper understanding of the Zionist ideological education of leftist Jewish youth in Czechoslovakia and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. As we shall see, during this period, the hachsharot evolved from being an almost complete failure to playing a crucial role as part of a more comprehensive system of retraining and employment for Jews in the early years of the Protectorate. Indeed, the pioneer youth movements' focus on the cult of the chosen body[2] resulted in a substantial discrepancy between the ideology of the educational programs and their practical implementation.

From a methodological point of view, this work is based on analyses of educational and propaganda materials from both movements, which represented specific practices and discourses, and on oral history testimonies. In the post-war period, most of the documents were transferred to Israeli archives. The sources used here are related to the movements mentioned above and can be found in the Israeli research and documentation center of the Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir movement in Givat Haviva and in the Machon Lavon Archives for the Labour Movements. I

* The study was co-funded by the Czech Science Foundation (GAČR), project No. 21-24776S.

[1] For more information about Zionism in Czechoslovakia see Kateřina Čapková, *Czechs, Germans, Jews? National Identity and the Jews of Bohemia* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012); Tatjana Lichtenstein, *Zionists in Interwar Czechoslovakia: Minority Nationalism and the Politics of Belonging* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2016); Vít Strobach, *Židé: národ, rasa, třída. Sociální hnutí a „židovská otázka" v českých zemích 1861-1921* [Jews: Nation, Race, Class. Social Movements and the "Jewish Question" in the Czech Lands in 1861-1921] (Praha: NLN, 2015). General information can be found in these books, and a very short summary in the article by Dalibor Státník, "Hachšara jako předpoklad alije (cesta z moderního židovského područenství k vlastní státnosti)" [Hachsharah as a Precondition of Aliyah (The Way from Modern Jewish Subordination to the Own Statehood], in *Židé v boji a odboji: rezistence československých Židů v letech druhé světové války. Příspěvky účastníků mezinárodní konference konané ve dnech 17.-18. října 2006 v Praze pod záštitou prof. RNDr. Václava Pačesa, DrSc., předsedy Akademie věd ČR* (Praha: Historický ústav, 2007), 357-364.

[2] The phrase "chosen body" refers to the cult of building the nation and the individual body: Meira Weiss, *The Chosen Body: The Politics of the Body in Israeli Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).

also used memoirs and testimonies of former *hachsharah* participants from the Oral History Collection of the Jewish Museum in Prague.[3] On the basis of these documents, we can trace the role of the hachsharot training camps in fulfilling the goals of Socialist Zionism, as two different movements in interwar Czechoslovakia conceived them. We can also get a better image of the program of these centers and its perception by Jewish youth themselves. And last but not least, we can get an insight into Zionist propaganda during the interwar period and at the beginning of Second World War, when the Jewish population, in general, became more interested in emigration and in the organization of hachsharot and vocational training centers. It is apparent from the materials and testimonies under study that there was a substantial discrepancy between the ideology behind the educational programs and their activities in practice.[4]

Zionism as an identification strategy in the First Republic of Czechoslovakia

In the interwar years, the Jews of Czechoslovakia formed a well-integrated minority in a heterogeneous national society. However, the Jewish community itself was not uniform: Jews differed in language, national and political affiliation, education, and character. As a result of Joseph II's reforms of in the 1780s, a new German school system was founded and a significant part of the Jews in Bohemia and Moravia adopted the German language and culture naturally. It was not until the second half of the nineteenth century that part of these Jews started leaning toward Czech nationalism and later toward Czech-Jewish and Jewish national movements.[5]

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[3] The collection is focused on the testimonies of the first and second generations of survivors. I am aware that the interviews from the collection deal mainly with the experience of the Holocaust, and therefore the interviewees' memories and recollection of their experience in the hachsharot might be influenced by what they went through afterwards. However, I consider their testimonies as valuable sources to understand the hachsharah from the participants' perspective.

[4] Part of the article is based on my unpublished PhD thesis, Daniela Bartáková, "Židovská pionýrská mládež v meziválečném Československu mezi sionismem a komunismem – budování vyvoleného těla" [Jewish Pioneer Youth in Interwar Czechoslovakia between Zionism and Communism - the Building of the Chosen Body] (PhD diss., Palacký University Olomouc, 2020).

[5] Hillel J. Kieval, *Languages of Community*: *The Jewish Experience in the Czech Lands* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

Broadly speaking, there were differences between the Eastern and Western parts of the republic. In Bohemia and Moravia, Jews were highly urbanized, primarily involved in commerce, trade and industry; they were physicians, lawyers, members of the middle-class, and came from educated families. In Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia, Jews represented a rather less-educated, orthodox minority, settled in villages and small cities, and characterized by Ezra Mendelsohn as an Eastern European type of Jewry. According to the census of 1921, there were more than 350,000 Jews in Czechoslovakia.[6]

Historical research has pointed out that Czechoslovak Jews viewed Zionism as way to anchor themselves as an integrated minority in a multi-national state, rather than as an "exit strategy," as explained by Lichtestein:

> In interwar Czechoslovakia, Zionists adopted a model for citizenship that combined an ethnonational Jewish identity with patriotism. Indeed, to Zionists, the nationalization of Jewish society was a necessary precondition for good citizenship. While the country's constitution guaranteed Jews equal rights, actual social and civic equality depended on a broader public identification of Jews as belonging to the state and Jews' feeling of being at home. Zionists' political project of belonging aimed to define the boundaries and loyalties of the Jewish nation as well as to contest narratives that marked Jews as outsiders and excluded them from the community of equal citizens.[7]

Zionism, as an identification strategy, cultural movement, and a socialist push to make Jews move to Palestine, never became a mass movement. The Shekel statistics[8] help us understand the extent of Czechoslovak Jews' affiliation to Zionism as they provide data on the number of registered members of the Zionist movement who paid membership fees. These sources reveal that in 1933 there were 23,766 Jews registered in the Shekel statistics, more precisely 4,330 in Bohemia, 5,774 in Moravia and Silesia; 8,106 in Slovakia; and 5,556 in Subcarpathian

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[6] Ezra Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe between the World Wars* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987), 131-170.

[7] Lichtenstein, *Zionists in Interwar Czechoslovakia*, 2-3.

[8] The Zionist statistics of those who paid a membership fee, the so called Shekel.

Ruthenia.[9] However, between the 1920s and 1930s Zionist youth organizations of different orientations proliferated in Czechoslovakia, and for many of them the cult of youth became an integral part of their Zionist curricula.

The establishment of a He-Halutz branch in Czechoslovakia played an essential role in the creation of the first agricultural training centers—the hachsharot—which aimed to provide pioneers with appropriate training in agriculture and practical training for life in collective settlements. The He-Halutz movement originated at the end of the First World War in Eastern Europe. After the communist regime in Russia prohibited He-Halutz activities, Poland became its new center. Its ideology reflected the labor wing of Zionism. The term *halutz* itself—meaning "pioneer" and "vanguard" —carries the connotation of a firm determination to achieve the goal of carrying out the socialist national project.[10] In 1921, He-Halutz was incorporated into the overall organizational structure of Czechoslovak Zionists, who provided both administrative support and financial aid to its pioneering activities. The ideological training of the hachsharot was based on the concept of Socialist Zionism, and its goal was to create an agricultural and working-class in Palestine through the social and economic re-stratification of the Jewish population. The youth movements mentioned above also pursued these goals.

This early phase of the hachsharot in the First Republic of Czechoslovakia ended in 1928 after He-Halutz gave up on running training farms due to the economic crisis in Palestine and the restriction on aliyah implemented by the British administration. These made it extremely difficult to obtain immigration certificates for young emigrants from Czechoslovakia. According to He-Halutz, between 1923 and 1925 the number of its affiliates grew from 105 to 382. Still, the

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[9] Nezpracované spisy ústředního sionistického svazu [Unprocessed Writings of the Central Zionist Union], Varia, 1933[Various], signature 2130, box139, Archiv židovského muzea v Praze [Archives of The Jewish Museum in Prague] (AŽMP). Unfortunately, it is impossible to come up with exact numbers for the membership of each Zionist movement.

[10] The movement continued the activities of the first Zionists who left for Palestine at the end of the nineteenth century. These were members of the Bilu and Hibat Zion organizations. However, He-Halutz acquired its fundamental importance and more robust structure during the Third Aliyah (1919-1923). See Gideon Shimoni, *The Zionist Ideology* (Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 1995), 232-234. Daniela Bartáková, "Hašomer Hacair a Tchelet Lavan v Československu (1918-1938)*"* [Ha-Shomer Ha-Tzair and Tchelet Lavan in Czechoslovakia] (Unpublished MA thesis, Olomouc, 2010), 34.

number of those who made aliyah did not: 113 men and 14 women.[11] These factors had a decisive impact on He-Halutz, since their few Jewish pioneers abandoned the hachsharot. According to Lichtenstein, the lack of funds and certificates was not the only problem, as "activists also complained of a significant gender imbalance, with three times more boys than girls joining in [...]."[12]

Leading youth Movements and Key Ideologies behind the *Hachsharot*

Among the many Jewish Zionist youth movements that proliferated at the time in Czechoslovakia, the Tchelet Lavan and Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir were strongly influenced by the labor wing of Zionism and scouting ideologies. The Tchelet Lavan was inspired by the German romantic movement Wandervogel, which promoted youth autonomy, the return to a more authentic and spiritual way of life, and the commitment to nature and communal experiences. The first group of the Blau-Weiss organization, directly inspired by the Wandervogel, was established in Prague in 1919 and found its members predominantly among German-speaking Jewish youth, especially in Bohemia and Moravia. The Czechoslovak branch was established under the name The Association of the Jewish Youth Tchelet Lavan (Jüdischer Wanderbund Blau-Weiss), and focused primarily on health and the spiritual, moral, and physical preparation of its members through hiking and camping.[13] In this phase, learning about Jewish history, Zionism, and Eretz Israel was secondary for the Blau-Weiss. The radicalization of German nationalism and the growing antisemitism, which spread through youth movements and organizations such as the Wandervogel and the Blau-Weiss, questioned the presence of Jews in their ranks. As noted by Čapková, the Blau-Weiss in Bohemia strictly opposed the militarism that started to characterize the German Blau-Weiss, including the military-like features of the scouting movements, which were also distinct features of Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir.

[11] Data taken from Lichtestein, *Zionism in Interwar Czechoslovakia,* 408, footnote 48. Quoted from "Bericht über die Weidah des čsl. Landesverbandes Hechalutz," Z4/2154, 26-27 Dezember 1925, Central Zonist Archives, Jerusalem.

[12] Lichtenstein, *Zionism in Interwar Czechoslovakia*, 284.

[13] "Blau-Weiss", Spolkový katastr, PŘ, SK XIV/342, Archiv Hlavního Města Prahy [Archives of the City of Prague]; Bartáková, "Jewish Pioneer Youth."

After the First World War, the Blau-Weiss in Czechoslovakia became completely independent from the German organization as it started to commit primarily to Jewish-Zionist education, and in 1923 changed its name to Tchelet Lavan (Blue-White). In 1938 a Czech-speaking branch split from Tchelet Lavan—it was named El-Al.[14]

The Czechoslovak Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir movement had its predecessor in Poland. It was inspired by the international scouting movement founded by Baden-Powell, which emphasized outdoor educational activities, productive work and a more military-like organization. The migration waves of Ostjuden brought these ideas to the Eastern part of the Republic during the First World War, and these put down roots, especially in the Eastern part of Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia. In these regions, Baden Powell's scouting ideology was widespread throughout Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir's organization. In the Eastern part of Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia, these ideas were also found in the Kadima organization. After both movements merged in Ha-Shomer Kadima, their common platform promoted education of the Jewish youth, fostering He-Halutz activities and supporting productive work in Eretz Israel and the Diaspora. However, soon after that, the movement split, and the Slovakian branch of Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir was established.[15]

The geographical sphere of influence of the two movements was different. While Tchelet Lavan appealed to the Jewish youth of Bohemia and Moravia as a movement opposing the bourgeois life of the older, middle-class, German-speaking generation, Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir appealed to the youth of the Eastern part the Republic as a way out from orthodox Jewish life.

In the mid-1920s, Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir and Tchelet Lavan signed an agreement that established their spheres of action in different territories of Czechoslovakia. Thanks to this agreement, the hachsharot became places of mutual interconnection and confrontation between the two movements. From the second half of the 1920s, He-Halutz training centers moved mainly to the East of

[14] For more on the history of the Blau-Weiss and Tchelet Lavan in Bohemia see also Čapková, *Czechs, Germans, Jews?*, 228-234.

[15] Pavol Mešťan, *Hašomer Hacair – Dějiny hnutia* [Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir – History of the movement] (Bratislava: SNM – Múzeum židovskej kultúry, 2001); Livia Rotkirchen, "Slovakia II., 1918-1938," in *Jews of Czechoslovakia, Historical Studies and Surveys*, Vol. I., eds. Huge Colman, Guido Kisch, and Aharon M. Rabinowicz (Philadelphia: JPS, 1968), 85-124.

the republic, where a new membership base was growing rapidly. Thus, Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir established separate hachsharot, next to the so-called "mixed" hachsharot, consisting of members of youth organizations as well as young people without a previous affiliation to Zionist movements. It was also on the fields of the mixed hachsharot that the cooperation between the two movements became apparent.[16]

At that time, Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir represented a well-organized movement with its own history and precise curricula oriented toward the Jews from the Eastern part of the republic. In the same period, Tchelet Lavan focused instead on Jews from Bohemia and Moravia. Cooperation between the two movements was problematic from the very beginning: their separate historical development and the different character of their membership was apparent, especially in the kibbutz movements in Palestine and the activities of their emissaries (*shlihim*). Then they clashed on the issue of the relationship with the international pioneer youth movement He-Halutz.

Despite considerable differences between the two organizations and a distinct membership base from different parts of the republic, the two movements had much in common in their ideological programs. However, in this initial phase, Zionism, intended as a nationalist movement to persuade youth to make aliyah, characterized neither Tchelet Lavan nor Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir. Both of them stood out for their scouting activities and for embracing Zionism's socialist ideology during the First World War, under the influence of the Balfour declaration and the Russian revolution.

Socialist Zionists adopted the politics of social and economic re-stratification of the Jewish nation as it was introduced by the fathers of this wing, Dov Ber Borochov, Aron David Gordon, Nachman Syrkin, and many others. They introduced a mixture of class struggle and nationalism and formulated the principles of "normalization" of the Jewish nation through the colonization project, physical labor, and the return to the land.[17] Among the goals of the

[16] Martin J. Wein, "Zionism in Interwar Czechoslovakia: Palestinocentrism and Landespolitik," in *Judaica Bohemiae* 44, no. 1 (2009): 5-47.

[17] Their ideas were based on the studies of prominent Austro-marxists, and applied the concept of national and class struggle to the Jewish nation. See Ber Borochov, "The national Question and the Class Struggle," in *The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader*, ed. Arthur Herzberg

Socialist Zionist's program were *Shlilat Ha-Golah*—negation of diaspora; *Hagshamah Atzmit*—self-realization through physical work; aliyah—emigration to Palestine; and *Kibbush Ha-Aretz*—the conquering of the "Promised Land."[18] These goals were supposed to be achieved thanks to the cult of the "New Hebrew Man," whose typical representatives were young Jewish pioneers—the *halutzim*. As mentioned in the testimony of the former pioneer and leader of the Jewish pioneers in Palestine, Meron Benvenisti, the Zionist slogans about the negation of the diaspora with which he grew up were supposed to instill in the youth a deep sense of shame for the miserable and inauthentic life of their ancestors. In this respect Zionist terminology served as an effective power practice. The Zionist apparatus set up a formal and informal educational system, through which it promoted the ideas of Socialist Zionism both in Palestine and in individual countries. The cult of the homeland through which the Jewish pioneer youth were initiated into the discourses and practices of Socialist Zionism was framed in terms of the country's reconstruction project.[19]

The ideology of the hachsharot was closely linked to the goal of building a "New Hebrew Man" and promoting the idea of *hagshamah*—self-realization through physical work, which entails the practical realization of the national goals and ideals of Socialist Zionism, principles anchored in the ideological program of both movements under discussion. The practical ideology of the hachsharah was a mixture of eclecticism, socialism, and collectivism with the aim of making Jewish youth productive and building a chosen collective national body. The successful completion of the program became a necessary precondition for aliyah. In addition to fulfilling the goals of Socialist Zionism, it promoted the occupational, social and economic re-stratification of the Jewish population through work in agriculture. More generally, a healthy lifestyle was widely promoted among nationalists from the end of the nineteenth century and it became another goal of

(Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1997), 356; Shlomo Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism: The Intellectual Origins of the Jewish State* (Basic Books: New York, 2017), 147-158.

[18] Gabriel Piterberg, *The Returns of Zionism: Myths, Politics and Scholarship in Israel* (London - New York: Verso, 2008).

[19] Meron Benvenisti, *Conflicts and Contradictions* (New York: Villard Books, 1986).

Jewish pioneer youth.[20] In the training camps, the equality of all members was strongly emphasized. Participants were required to have and cultivate their sense of responsibility, duty, and justice. Stress was put on relations between individual members, mutual communication, and a strong sense of solidarity, which should not be motivated only by ideological goals but also by emotional ties between members.[21]

The connection between men's bonds and nationalism was an apparent reference to the ideas of Hans Blüher and other ideologists of nationalism, whose views on the cult of the body and corporeality had been taken up by nationalists since the late nineteenth century. Hans Blüher was a co-founder and the leading theoretician of the German youth movement Wandervogel. He promoted his ideas in the books *Die Rolle der Erotik in der männlichen Gesellschaft*[22] and *Die deutsche Wandervogelbewegung als erotisches Phänomen*.[23] No less important for the ideological evolution of Jewish youth pioneering activities was the Viennese philosopher Otto Weininger and his book *Geschlecht und Charakter*, which was a bestseller at the time. Both authors were well known for their antisemitic ideas, but various Jewish youth organizations took inspiration from their works nonetheless.[24] For Blüher, sports, combat, and military youth organizations helped forge a manly society and a specific male Eros, crucial factors that shaped the national state and patriotism. On the one hand, the national state represented a homosexual construct based on erotic, masculine male bonds. On the other, family represented a social heterosexual construct. Thus, homosexuality was not perceived as an expression of femininity or weakness; on the contrary, it indicated male power. In this representation, man reproduces the state through homosexuality, while women can reproduce humankind only. A strong nation

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[20] Israel Oppenheim, *The Struggle of Jewish Youth for Productivization: The Zionist Youth Movement in Poland* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1989), v-vi; Weiss, *The Chosen Body,* 1-6.

[21] Oppenheim, *The Struggle of Jewish Youth*, v-vi.

[22] Hans Blüher, *Die Rolle der Erotik in der männlichen Gesellschaft*, vol. 2., (Jena: n.p., 1918).

[23] Hans Blüher, *Die deutsche Wandervogelbewegung als erotisches Phänomen. Ein Beitrag zur Erkenntnis der sexuellen Inversion* (Berlin: n.p., 1912).

[24] Oppenheim, *The Struggle of Jewish Youth,* v-vi; Hanan Cohen, "Tchelet Lavan in the years 1926-1939," in *Rhapsody to Tchelet Lavan in Czechoslovakia: Hashomer Hatzair, Noar Tzofi Halutzi, Netzach*, eds. Amos Sinai, Amir Gershon, and Nanne Margol (Israel: The Association for the History of Tchelet Lavan-El Al Czechoslovakia, 1996), 57-59.

can be created once family ties and sexual urges between men and women are disrupted.[25] In his works, Blüher criticized Jews' strong family ties, their racial and ethnic bonds, and the absolute lack of male bonds (*Männerbundschwäche*) among them. Therefore, Jews were not capable of creating a national state, and unless they fostered such bonds, they would always be merely a race and not a nation. Similarly, Weininger also combined contemporary antisemitic stereotypes and misogynistic depictions of female weakness.

These educational ideals were incorporated into the more comprehensive notion of the "New Hebrew Man" mentioned above, the cult of healthy, strong, and courageous men. Nationalists adopted it as the symbol of a "new," physically and psychically healthy man, representing a masculine stereotype, a figure inspired by ancient Greek heroes. Enlighteners, on the other hand, investigated the relationships between man, woman, and nature. They pursued the harmonization of the physical body and the psyche. Also, new scientific fields helped cultivate the national and individual body, and these played a crucial role in specifying those who were not allowed to participate in nation building. Contemporary scientific discourse by (male) hygienists, racial experts, eugenicists, anthropologists, and other scientists, provided ample evidence about the inferiority of those then marginalized by society—i.e., Roma, Jews, vagrants, prostitutes and criminals. Marginalized groups were seen as sick, neurotic, hysterical, and degenerated.[26] At least some nationalists supported male characteristics and depicted them as the opposite of their corresponding female features. Negative female attributes formed the immoral and non-rational substance of certain social groups—disloyal groups unable to create their national state.[27]

The German Jugendbewegung, the cultural and educational youth movement of the nineteenth century, played a key ideological role in cultivating the ideal of the individual and collective body, supporting a return to nature, and criticizing the

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[25] Todd Presner, *Muscular Judaism*: *The Jewish Body and the Politics of Regeneration* (London-New York: Routledge, 2007), 14; Blüher, *Die Rolle der Erotik*.

[26] George Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 56-76; Daniela Tinková, " 'Přirozený řád' a ideologie oddělených sfér. Příspěvek k otázce konstruování 'přirozené role ženy' v pozdně osvícenské vědě" ["Natural Order" and the Ideology of Divided Spheres. A Contribution to the Issue of Constructing the "Natural Woman in the Late Enlightenment Science"], *Kontext: časopis pro gender a vědu* 3-4 (2003): 1-17.

[27] Mosse, *The Image of Man*, 56-76.

bourgeois way of life. Various sports and gymnastic organizations connected to the German romantic movement—which promoted physical fitness and extolled man's will, courage, and morality—played a no less important role.[28] A leading intellectual that dealt with the diagnosis and cure of the degenerated Jewish body on a collective and individual basis was a German Jewish physician and the forefather of the Zionist movement and the notion of Muscular Zionism, Max Nordau. As pointed out by Meira Weiss: "In Nordau's term, coined as early as 1898, Zionism was to be 'Judaism with muscles.' The 'muscle Jew' was to replace the pale-faced and thin-chested 'coffeehouse Jew,' and to regain the heroism of his forefathers in the land of Zion."[29] Furthermore, he called for the systematic collection of statistical data on the Jewish population. At the World Zionist Congress in 1901, he called for collecting data on—among other indicators—mortality, fertility, housing and contraception, to analyze them and subsequently utilize them in the project of national regeneration.[30] Statistics represented a crucial scientific discipline at that time, and one should understand data collecting in the context of the time. Within national movements, it became a common practice. In 1902, Alfred Nossig founded the Boureau der Statistik der Juden in Berlin. He collected and analyzed anthropological and biological data about European Jewry, including family relationships, skull sizes, alcohol and other drug addictions, numbers of suicides, and so on.[31] The Boureau's main task was the so-called regeneration of Eastern European Jewry, their "Westernization."[32] At the same time, many other Jewish and non-Jewish statisticians, demographers, physicians, eugenicists, anthropologists, and other scientists looked for a solution to the Jewish degeneration caused by long-lasting life in ghettos and separation from the soil. Cultivation of the Jewish body was the cure, and the means to achieve it were the Socialist Zionist Program's practices. Since hachsharah played a crucial role in the whole regeneration process, statistical data and candidate selection became an integral part of the entire procedure.

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[28] Gerhard Albricht, Hans Christ, and Wolfram Hockel, *Deutsche Jugendbewegung im Südosten* (Bielefeld: Gieseking, 1969).

[29] Weiss, *The Chosen Body*, 1.

[30] Presner, *Muscular Judaism*, 208.

[31] Ibid., 208.

[32] Strobach: *Židé: národ, rasa, třída,* 153-154.

When youth and gymnastic movements became supporters of this type of masculinity, Jewish youth organizations, such as Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir and Tchelet Lavan, drew strong inspiration from them.

The "New Hebrew Man" construct followed the European notions of masculinity mentioned above and was adopted and elaborated by various other Zionist movements and organizations. Jewish youth movements in general, and sports and gymnastic clubs in particular, were crucial for Zionists because of their potential to mobilize Jews in support of Zionism and the cultivation of national and individual bodies. Thus, like other Zionist youth movements, Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir and Tchelet Lavan internalized fin-de-siécle stereotypes about Jews, such as Galut (Diaspora) Jews being examples of physical and moral disorder. Consequently, the Jewish race could build a strong and healthy nation through the systematic cultivation of the (national) body and appropriate physical and educational activities.

Propaganda and Recruitment Campaign

Within the pioneer groups an important role was played by charismatic leaders, the so-called *shlihim* (messengers, emissaries) from Palestine, members of the He-Halutz movement, experienced in organizing training camps, and actively acquainted with kibbutz life. Their task was to bypass individual Zionist movements and mobilize Jewish youth to join pioneer organizations and the hachsharot.[33] These young men were often Eastern European Jews who had arrived in Czechoslovakia during the First World War as refugees escaping pogroms and had gone on to make aliyah. During the period of the First Republic, they visited Czechoslovakia to promote ideas of collectivization and kibbutz life. Among the *shlihim* of the Czechoslovak pioneer movements Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir and Tchelet Lavan were the prominent Viennese member of Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir Meir Yaari and the important member of the Polish branch Chilek

[33] For details, see Philip Boehm, " 'Tchelet Lavan' a School for Zionist Self-Realization," in *Rhapsody to Tchelet Lavan*, eds. Sinai, Gershon, and Margol, 29; Helena Barski, "The Founding of Heftziba," in Ibid., 31-32; Nanne Margol, "Educational Method," in Ibid., 144-154; Amos Sinai, "In the Footsteps of the first pioneers looking back after 70 Years," in Ibid., 36.

Harari (Jechiel Grünberg). They helped organize summer camps and advised on how to make young people practice collectivism. "The representative of He-Halutz was a young Russian Jew who had lived in a kibbutz for many years," recollects a former Tchelet Lavan member from Brno, Fritz Beer, in his memoirs:

> We had mostly heard all he had to say; how they're making the desert blossom with a spade and a hoe, how they're overcoming the heat and their own inexperience, about setbacks and disappointments, about the immeasurable joy of the first harvest and the first calf born in a cowshed which they had built themselves. He spoke in Yiddish, with sentiment, his accent and words, that were rooted in old German, were alien to us. When he would lose all hope, he would get new strength by walking through orange groves and the cowshed. Yes, there was dirt, sweat and stench; but also a new kind of joy, even in a bit of stinky cow manure, because it was a Jewish cow's stench.[34]

Beer grow up in well-to-do family, under the influence of his brother, the well-known journalist Kurt Konrád. Fritz later abandoned the Zionist movement for the Communist Party.

As part of their propaganda efforts to recruit affiliates, Zionists urged young people to give up their university studies in favor of state-building activities in Palestine. Besides encouraging Jewish youth to do agricultural work, a generational split between young people and their families was often supported by *shlihim* and movements leaders.[35]

As a part of the process of building a healthy chosen body, the most capable candidates from the ranks of pioneers were to be selected to leave for Palestine. Each applicant had to undergo a thorough selection procedure, including psycho-technical tests.

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[34] Fritz Beer, *...a tys na Němece střílel, dědo?* [Did You Shoot at Germans, Grandpa?] (Praha - Litomyšl: Paseka, 2008), 55.

[35] Akiva Nir, "Sionistická organizácia, mládežnícke hnutia a emigrácia do Palestíny v rokoch 1918-1945" [Zionist Organization of Youth, Youth Movements and Emigration to Palestine in 1918-1948], in *Tragédia slovenských Židov: meteriály z mezinárodného symposia* [Tragedy of Slovakian Jews: Documents from International Symposium], ed. Dezider Tóth (Datei: Banská Bystrica, 1992), 27-43.

In addition, the complex process leading to aliyah included a questionnaire to be filled in by both the candidate and their group leader. The questionnaire evaluated the candidates' intelligence, organizational skills, autonomy, conscientiousness, manual dexterity, and physical fitness. There were also questions about the candidates' behavioral nature, focusing on some qualities, such as dealing with people and problems. Various questions examined abstract thinking, leadership abilities, attitude towards authorities, tendencies towards confrontation, subordination, isolation, devotion, superficiality, as well as learning abilities, thoroughness, social altruism, egoism, and dreams. Other character traits that were examined to determine participants' admission were their self-confidence, sense of adventure, fearfulness, doubtfulness, character inconsistency, bravado, prudence, sensitivity, openness, obstinacy and cunning. Group leaders focused on the level of possible physical exertion of candidates and their tendencies to avoid work. They had to describe the candidates' endurance to psychical and mental efforts under pressure; personal characteristics such as sensitivity, aggressiveness, and the way they settled disputes; and finally the candidates' character itself, their ability to act or their shyness.[36] Thus, all aspects of the candidates' lives, including family, financial and social relationships, and the economic and social position of each candidate's family members, were subjected to a detailed examination. The questionnaires also covered the area of leisure time, interests, hobbies, and popular but also unpopular reading preferences of each applicant.[37]

Educational Activities and Training Practices, and their Impact on *Hachsharot* Participants

In the second half of the 1930s, both Tchelet Lavan and Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir organized hachsharot in temporary training camps that lasted about four weeks. There, Jewish youth learned not only agriculture and the history of the Jewish nation, but also the ideology and practices of Socialist Zionism, i.e., the physical empowerment of the young body and the internalization of ideological notions.

[36] Fragebogen – Misrad für Berufsberatung, Histadruth Techeleth Lavan, III-54A-437-2, Machon Lavon – Archives for the Labour Movements, Tel Aviv (ML).
[37] Ibid.

The hachsharot promoted a transformation of Jewish life both at the individual level and across the whole of Jewish society, whose social-economic structure was supposed to be changed entirely. Each individual was to toughen their body with hard work, strengthen their muscles, sharpen their mental abilities, and overcome the so-called "Jewish degeneration" collectively.

In the circulars Tchelet Lavan dedicated to the organization of training camps in 1937, we find a clear appeal to Jewish youth, pointing out physical work in agriculture as an integral part of the movement's ideological content. It must not be an "episode or a holiday experience" we read; instead, it must be seen by participants as a "test of authenticity and power of thought," a life goal. According to the records of the Tchelet Lavan training camps, the mission of the halutzim was "a synthesis between spiritual and physical work [...]. The meaning of life becomes a productive interaction between manual labor and mental activity."[38]

The working day in the training camps lasted ten hours, and the young participants were paid a minimum wage depending on the work performed and the farm's owner.

In these circulars, we can also find general descriptions of camp activities. The twenty-five-day Tchelet Lavan training camps started with the morning physical warm-up, followed by the necessary personal hygiene, breakfast, work assignments, personal hygiene, and lunch. After a short break, the program continued with lessons on the ideological principles that inspired the movement and sports activities. It was followed by another meeting or afternoon work assignments, dinner, and the evening program. The teaching of Hebrew was not neglected either, since it represented an essential part of Zionist education.[39]

The archives of Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir provide a deeper insight into the educational program of the hachsharot. As made clear by the author of the educational brochure, Ruben Spira, the young had to understand the major historical milestones of world Zionism. The movement's ideological teaching

[38] Choser, Zum Arbeitslager 54, 24.5.1937, 1, ML.

[39] Ibid., 2-4. A similar range of educational materials can be found in documents related to the Ha-Shomer Ha-Tzair movement—See Pokyny k praktické práci [Instructions for Practical Work], (4)1.2.2, Yad Yaari - The Centre for Research and Documentation of HaShomer HaTzair Movement and of the Kibbutz Artzi Federation, Givat Haviva, (YY); Ruben Spira, Ideologia našej výchovy [Ideology of our education], 1937, (2)2.2.-2, YY.

focused on the synthesis of socialism and Zionism, the problems of assimilation and Jewish nationalism, class struggle and Borochovism, and educational issues—criticism of the schooling system, the study of adolescent psychology, science, scouting, physical education. The contemporary situation in Palestine was also reflected in the movements' curricula. Alongside the general socialist ideology of the hachsharot, their educational programs went hand in hand with the (specific) dogmas and doctrines of the two movements.[40]

Hachsharot participants learned about the history of Eretz Israel from the First World War to the present (the war period, the immigration waves, the internal political crisis of the pioneer movement, the White Paper); the economic situation, and the problem of Jewish workers in the Yishuv, the kibbutz movements, the position of Eretz Israel in the Middle East, and the British administration. In addition to the historical part, there was extensive ideological training based on two main curricula. The first focused on the development of socialism from utopia to science. Here, discussion ranged from the beginnings of socialism during the French Revolution through the workers' movement in England and Robert Owen's ideals to the socialist movement in Germany. The second was focused on works by Karl Marx and his followers. The leaders in the camps gave a series of lectures on Marx and the Communist Manifesto, the development of the international workers' movement and the First International, the expansion of the political doctrine of Marxism, and the crystallization of historical materialism in the works of Friedrich Engels. The list of recommended literature and teaching materials was dominated by leading leftist intellectuals, such as Eduard Bernstein, Franz Mehring, Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Dov Ber Borochov, Bruno Bauer, and Vladimir Ilyich Lenin.[41]

In the memoires of hachsharah participants can often be found recollections of these centers as summer adventures. The diary named *Aliat Noar – Necach,* written in a camp in July 1939 in Malá Čermná, describes hachsharah as an adventure, a mixture of work, teaching, and unrestrained youthful entertainment. As mentioned in the diary, there were 45 participants in the camp. They remember tying sheaves [of wheat] and carrying out forest work, learning Hebrew, and an

[40] Pokyny k praktické práci, (4)1.2.2., YY; Ruben Spira, Ideologia našej výchovy, (2) 2.2.-2, YY.
[41] Ibid.

entertainment program that was more amusing than the lectures by "Palestinian teachers." The diary reveals that the moment most appreciated by participants was a joint meeting of Tchelet Lavan, El-Al,[42] and Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir members. The memoir also includes funny stories about the establishment of the Club Drben (Club of Gossips) as a "culturally humane camp institution with an exclusively critical mission."[43] Besides the details on work and communal activities, the dairy points out that all participants underwent medical screening to assess their physical condition and potential qualities useful for establishing a Jewish state in Palestine. At the end of the diary, the unknown author expresses his undisguised joy that all participants were recommended for aliyah.[44] This is further evidence of the Zionist youth movements' emphasis on their mission to build the chosen body.

Preparations for emigration to Palestine and building a new society were crucial activities for both movements. However, the lukewarm attitude of those members who perceived their participation in the hachsharot as a leisure activity rather than a real training for emigration became an issue both movements had to deal with. This is apparent in a number of testimonies:

> [Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir] was a very progressive organization; it still has its kibbutzim and headquarters in Israel today. Its goal was to build kibbutzim in Palestine. The pioneers who went to Palestine to establish kibbutzim were primarily members of He-Halutz or Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir. I got into a certain ideological contradiction because the goal of every member of Ha-Shomer was to go to the hachsharah and make *aliyah*, to move out. As soon as it became apparent I wouldn't go to *aliyah* after high school, they erased me from the movement, it seemed to me.[45]

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[42] El-Al was the Czech-language branch of the Tchelet-Lavan movement founded in 1937 as a result of growing German irredentism in Czechoslovakia. For more information, see Otto B. Kraus, "El-Al Divertimento," in *Rhapsody to Tchelet Lavan*, eds. Sinai, Gershon, and Margol, 257.

[43] Joman, Tábor Aliat Noar Necach [Diary, Camp of Aliyat Noar Necach], 10, Oral History Collection, AŽMP.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Testimony no. 260, J.U., Oral History Collection, AŽMP.

Other testimonies about the training programs emphasize that the participants' desire to continue studying in Europe rather than emigrating to Palestine represented an obstacle for the success of the hachsharot in Czechoslovakia. Mr. Š. L. in his oral testimony remembered: "I attended the hachsharah, but later on, after I graduated, my parents wanted me to continue my studies, [...], but that was actually forbidden in the movement. When someone studied, it meant leaving the movement [...]."[46] Since it was clear that Palestine needed strong hands to build a "promised land," intellectuals did not have a strong position within these movements. Since their inception, hachsharot clashed with the actual aspirations of many Jewish middle-class families from the Czech lands, whose strong commitment to education was one of their characteristic features and one of the fundamental pillars of their successful social mobility for several generations.

Despite the Zionist youth movements' propaganda and their efforts to organize training camps, departures to Palestine were hindered not only by the affiliates' inclination to stay in Europe, but also by the difficulties to obtain migration certificates and the lack of family support. In this spirit, several Zionist appeals came out, calling on young people to give up their lives, detach themselves from the home environment, their parents, their schools, and consciously choose a different future, the future of the nation. In many ways, the style of this recruitment propaganda resembled the radical style of Czech and German nationalists' campaigns at the time of the establishment of the First Republic. "Get up, son! [...] Do not listen, son, to your moralizing father and do not follow your mother's teachings."[47] This was also the way in which Zionists called on young people to join their movements. The movement's records also show complaints that grammar schools would not allow students to join the hachsharot, not even Jewish schools. Schools threatened students with failing their studies, and conducted anti-Zionist campaigns.[48]

Consequently, Jewish youth were encouraged to attend the movements against their parents' will, join their ranks in secret, or even take part in hachsharot secretly. A Ha-Shomer Ha-Tai'ir leaflet related to the hachsharah in Košice stated:

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[46] Testimony no. 354, Š.L., Oral History Collection, AŽMP.

[47] Giora Amir, "Na úvod" [At the Introduction], in *Hašomer Hacair*, ed. Mešťan, 11.

[48] Zápis moaca galilu Brenner, 5. júna 1930. [Note of the Moatza of Galil Brenner, June 5, 1939], (1)1.2.-2., YY.

> He [a Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir movement member] has to leave the pleasant life of his parents and leave a possibly beautiful future here and go to Eretz as an ordinary worker [...]. *Shome*r opposes parents who do not want their children to meet an unknown destiny; under the veil of love, parents want to turn their children away from it [...]. *Shomer* must therefore fight against his parents; he must prove to them that they raised him not for themselves but for a nation that has been wandering in Galut for millennia.[49]

Anxiety on whether to leave for Palestine after training in the hachsharah was emphasized by the young participants themselves. They expressed their fears and doubts on the pages of pioneer periodicals. For example, an unnamed sixteen-year-old expressed his fears in a poem published in the El-Al journal:

> Two roads to different directions,
> two roads and I don't know which one,
> I will choose one of them,
> I stand on one of them already,
> Fate put me there,
> the urge drives me to the other one.
> I can not decide,
> should I return and start to fight with Fate,
> Self-appointed guardian,
> Should I follow the paved road,
> the way millions have passed,
> and some came to happiness.[50]

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[49] Hachšara Košice, 1929. Boj šomera v každodennem životě. [Hashara Košice, Struggle of Shomer in Everyday Life], 15, (1) 4.2.-2., YY.

[50] "Dve cesty rozneho smeru, / dve cesty a neviem ktorú, / z nich vyvoliť mám,
Na jednej stojím už priam, / vložil ma na nu osud, / Ku druhej ženie ma pud. /Nerozhodný sem, / či vrátit sa a začať boj s Osudem, / Samozvaným poručníkem, / Či ďalej ísť cestu vyšlapanou, / Cestou, co miliony prešly, / z nich niektorí došli i šťastia /"; El-Al: Iton schichvat hacofim lehistadrut Hašomer Hacair, Moravská Ostrava. December 1935, (3) 3.2.-2., YY.

In the same journal, in an article entitled "Kus cesty" (A Piece of the Road), we can read about members' fears of an uncertain future and hard physical work, and worries about the fate of their families after their departure.[51] In this context, we see again the names of scientists whose works and teachings had already appeared in the educational materials of the Ha-Shomer Hatza'ir movement. Among the topics discussed were psychoanalysis and national autonomy, the goals of Socialist Zionism, and the mutual interconnection of national and family dysfunctions, i.e., the impact of family imbalances, and especially the relationship between parents and children, on nation-building. Works by the Socialist Zionist psychoanalyst Siegfried Bernfeld appeared in literature produced by Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir. Bernfeld criticized parental care as a source of an individual's social dysfunctions. He developed the idea of a national revival in which orphans could adapt especially well to the broader environment of the national community due to their lack of family bonds. According to this view, a community of young people without ties to their families but with strong, mutual relations could build a national community in a proper way.[52]

An integral part of the history of the Tchelet Lavan movement was the foundation of its Czech-language branch El-Al in 1937. The movement soon became quite successful and by the following year it already had about two hundred members. As mentioned in its statutes, El-Al fostered Jewish tradition, science, and art, to uplift the physical and moral qualities of the Jewish Youth. The means to achieve these goals were scouting, camping, sports, gymnastics, lectures, etc.[53] In February 1939, the El-Al movement split, the majority returned to the Tchelet Lavan movement while the minority joined the Makabi Ha-Tzair organization.[54] The emergence of El-Al might have reflected growing support for Nazism in Germany and related anti-German attitudes, an attempt to bring Czech-speaking Jews closer

[51] Kus cesty [Part of Way]. 5-6, (3) 3.2.-2., YY.

[52] Tara Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and Bottle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900-1948* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 146-148; Elkana Margalit, "Social and intellectual origins of the Hashomer Hatzair youth movement, 1913-20", *Journal of Contemporary History* 4, no. 2 (1969): 25-46. Accessed June 8, 2022, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/002200946900400202.

[53] EL-Al, SK XXII/2705, Archiv hlavního města Prahy [Prague City Archives].

[54] "Tchelet Lavan and El Al in the Years 1939-1941 a Memorandum," in *Rhapsody to Tchelet Lavan*, eds. Sinai, Gershon, and Margol, 275.

to Zionism, the choice to use the Czech language instead of German, and a struggle against assimilation.[55]

In the testimonies of some movement members we can also find a strong reflection of their loyalty and admiration for Czechoslovakia, alongside their identification with the Czech language. One of these witnesses recalls the creation of El Al as follows: "In 1937, a Jew named Pavel Kohn and a few others founded the Czech speaking Zionist movement." He also describes how some Jews perceived negatively the use of the German language within Zionist associations:

> We were very sensitive to that, even more so than the Czechs. So El-Al saw that only by being Czech-speaking, having a Czech-character, and with a Czech sense of humor, freedom and friendship can join the Czech environment, and they were also called El-Al. [...] [In a sense] up to that goal and upwards.[56]

The use of the Czech-language was even more significant for some members due to President T.G. Masaryk's personality and his popular cult. The president enjoyed great popularity and loyalty from Czechoslovak Jews, as confirmed by other witnesses' memories of this Czech branch of the movement:

> I grew up under the influence of T.G.M., and he was such a role model for all of us, and the truth will prevail, we believed it, even though it didn't turn out to work. But his humanistic ideals, I think we grew up on those, and he's been with us our whole lives.[57]

Similarly, another witness, Mrs. E.G., recalls:

> [...] we founded the El-Al, because what angered us in that Tchelet Lavan was, that they spoke German there. I said that I did not want to go to any German club [...] that we inclined to Czech a lot. In the 1920s, between

[55] Otto B. Kraus: "El Al Divertimento," 257.

[56] Testimony No. 331, A.O., Oral History Collection, AŽMP. In the last sentence the author refers to the Hebrew translation of El-Al as quoted above.

[57] Testimony no. 281, E.A., Oral History Collection, AŽMP.

> the wars, the Czech culture and books and theaters developed so nicely and everything, and [...] we went to F. Burian and Voskovec and Werich, they were our Gods. So at first [...] we founded some kind of a debating club [...]. And finally, we agreed that we would be somehow connected with Tchelet Lavan, but in the Czech edition [...].[58]

It is also worth mentioning that although the movement originated in the second half of the 1930s, since 1932 Tchelet Lavan had been publishing a Czech-language magazine that had a strong national content and often reported events associated with Czechoslovak nationalism. This was caused by growing support for Nazism in Germany, German irredentism, and the consequent natural inclination towards Czechoslovak/Jewish nationalism. This was apparent in the Czech-language branch of the Tchelet Lavan movement El-Al, the Tchelet Lavan movement itself, and Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir. However, despite the emphasis on training in the spirit of collectivism and Socialist Zionism, a large part of the Zionist youth never seriously considered emigration to Palestine, not even those who did their training in the hachsharot. Fritz Beer, a Tchelet Lavan member, wrote in his memoir: "Although re-stratification and emigration to Palestine as an agricultural worker was the goal of Tchelet Lavan, it did not mean anything to me at first. Czechoslovakia was my homeland and the world seemed to me to be untouched, as yet."[59] Especially for German-speaking members from bourgeois families hachsharah was a problematic experience, as Beer further points out in his recollection of his training near Opava in 1928:

> The first day of my introduction into the honorable task of transforming a stony desert into a blooming garden was very encouraging. I collected garbage on a meadow after a summer fete. [...] After I finished in the evening with a broken back, the meadow looked exactly the same as that morning. The next day I was taken to the field to plant some beet. [...] It seemed easy for the seventeen-year-old keen reader to spud the dry soil by the hoe – as far as the seventh beet. By the eighth my back started to hurt,

[58] Testimony no. 153, E.G., Oral History Collection, AŽMP.

[59] Beer: *...a tys*, 56.

> by the thirty-first I had blisters on my hands and after the forty-second my knees were trembling. [...] When they brought us milk and bread for lunch I fell asleep with exhaustion. In the afternoon I was thinking about the desert in Palestine, and that every lousy painfully planted beet was a strike against the world's antisemitism. It helped! – at least for the following quarter of an hour.[60]

Estimating the number of Jews who emigrated to Palestine during the First Republic of Czechoslovakia presents serious difficulties. An approximate estimate is between five to six thousand.[61] Participation in the hachsharot and He-Halutz movement played an important role in their emigration, alongside the certificate issued by the Palestinian Office and a touristic visa—after the document's expiration applicants remained in Palestine. However, as historian Martin Wein stated, "Overall, *aliyah* never became a major element of Czechoslovak Jewish life, and *halutzim* remained a minority in the Zionist minority in the Jewish minority."[62] After all, Czechoslovakia was a country where most of the Jewish young people felt anchored and secure.

The building of the chosen body and a socialist society based on the ideas of collectivization, the physical and moral revival of the Jewish nation and its social restratification, found a strong competitor in the period of the First Republic of Czechoslovakia in the form of Communism, which offered Jews an international identity on a very similar basis. However, this is a different story.[63]

Today, it is almost impossible to map all the locations of these training camps, nor the exact dates of their periods of activity. Dozens of places where hachsharot operated are mentioned in documents and the testimonies of witnesses. During the First Republic of Czechoslovakia, an important vocational school for Tchelet Lavan was founded in 1924 in Moravská Ostrava. Another important training farm was established in Bratislava; neither of them lasted long. A new farm was founded at Komorau near Troppau: "The farm extended over 22 hectares, used for grazing land, growing hay, a vegetable garden, and a cattle shed and chicken

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[60] Ibid., 61-62.

[61] Wein, "Zionism in Interwar Czechoslovakia," 5-47.

[62] Ibid., 18.

[63] Lichtenstein, *Zionism in Interwar Czechoslovakia*; Strobach, *Židé, národ, rasa, třída*.

houses." It became an important center for the Czechoslovak He-Halutz movement. However, it shut down after a few years of existence.[64] From 1924, the hachsharot project moved almost entirely to Slovakia. In the first war years, hachsharot and vocational training centers sprang up like mushrooms with extraordinary intensity, but their duration and very existence changed significantly with the Second Republic.

Hachsharot in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia at the Beginning of World War II

The disintegration of Czechoslovakia after the Munich Agreement in 1938, the following Nazi occupation, and the establishment of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia in March 1939 changed the organization of the hachsharot and their ideological program significantly. The Jewish community had to react to the growing danger immediately and adjust to the possible departure of young people from the country. In addition, after such extensive territorial changes, the areas where they operated had to be changed too. Our knowledge on the hachsharot organized during the first years of the war comes mostly from the Report of the Jewish Religious Community of 1942, [65] the contemporary press, and the testimonies of movements' members.

After the Jews' exclusion from economic life, the need to speed up the training of young people for emigration to Palestine became an essential goal for Jewish Community leaders. At the beginning of 1939, all the Zionist associations in Czechoslovakia ceased to exist, and an already existing umbrella organization, Die zionistische Zentralverband (Central Zionist Union), with several subdivisions, took over their activities. As far as Jewish emigration was concerned, the crucial role was played by the Palästina-Amt (Palestinian Office), He-Halutz, and the

[64] Yehuda Erez (Rezniczenko), "Hechalutz in Czechoslovakia 1921-1934,"in *Rhapsody to Tchelet Lavan*, eds. Sinai, Gershon, and Margol, 67.

[65] Helena Krejčová, Jana Svobodová, and Anna Hyndráková, *Židé v protektorátu: hlášení Židovské náboženské obce v roce 1942: dokumenty / Die Juden im Protektoraten Böhmen und Mähren* (Havlíčkův Brod: Maxdorf, 1997).

Jüdische Jugendhilfe (The Jewish Help for Youth), which took care of the preparation for emigration of the youth aged from 12 to 17 years.[66]

The possibility of emigrating to Palestine depended on the number of immigration certificates issued by the British Administration in Palestine. Their number was limited and allocated to Palestinian Offices worldwide; their clerks subsequently proposed to the British consulates those applicants corresponding to emigration directives, and then consuls assigned certificates accordingly. Thus, the Palestinian Office under the Central Zionist Union became the only provider of organized emigration in the Protectorate; soon after its foundation, it was overwhelmed by applicants' requests for two reasons. Firstly, Zionists were traditionally well acquainted with the emigration process to Palestine and flexible in reacting to its changing conditions. Secondly, they were capable and willing to help with the emigration procedure of individuals to other countries as well.[67]

"Since the number of certificates was limited, the selection of candidates became the most difficult task the Palestinian Office had to deal with."[68] A newly founded service provided all the necessary information regarding the emigration procedure to applicants and helped them obtain all the required documents. Once the applicants filled out comprehensive questionnaires and submitted relevant documents, the Palestinian Office chose those candidates who had the highest chance of getting the certificates. The candidates' ability to work in agriculture or crafts was examined, and so was their potential to contribute to the welfare of the Jewish community in the Yishuv. Families with children who had undergone hachsharah training were preferred. A chance of emigrating was also given to people who would establish enterprises in Palestine with a cash guarantee above 1000 pounds. However, there was also a fund to make it possible for applicants without warranties to emigrate. These candidates, though, had to gain certificates of training for manual work.[69]

For this purpose, retraining and vocational centers and courses, agricultural working groups, and youth camps were organized with the permission of the

[66] Ibid., 178. The other subdivisions of the Palestinian Office were The Karen Kajemet Le Jisrael Fund and Karen Hajesod.

[67] Ibid., 179.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid., 179-180.

Zentralstelle für jüdische Auswanderung (Central Office for Jewish Emigration).[70] "Even before the foundation of the Central Office for Jewish Emigration (March-July 1939), the Palestinian Office trained for emigration 888 people."[71] In the same year 1939, thanks to the Palestinian Office, another 2,654 people emigrated successfully—1,988 of them had no financial guarantees. In the following years, emigration to Palestine became even more complicated, and the Palestinian Office oriented its activities to the emigration of young people to neutral countries, from where they were supposed to emigrate to Palestine after completion of their vocational training.[72]

To make as many candidates as possible emigrate, Zionists redistributed retraining and re-qualification activities across its different subdivisions: young people were organized into agricultural groups, while the others underwent vocational training in crafts.[73] Already in 1939, even before Jews were excluded from the economy, many Jewish young people decided to work in agriculture to obtain emigration certificates. In spring 1939, about 550 people were employed as agricultural workers at various farms supervised by the Jewish Labor Centre.[74]

He-Halutz was responsible for the re-qualification of the age group from 17 to 35 years. The organizational structure of the hachsharot changed, as well as the age of their participants. While before the war it was young Zionists from almost all social strata who emigrated, now the older age group was called to leave the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia too. The situation became even more complicated as the number of emigration certificates to Palestine decreased. He-Halutz still organized and provided agricultural training farms, which gathered groups of hundreds of workers, usually during the harvest season. However, its activities in the field of Jewish youth emigration overlapped with those of the Jewish Help for Youth and the Central Office for Jewish Emigration in Prague.[75]

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[70] After the foundation of the Central Office for Jewish Emigration in Prague in July 1939, the centralization of the Zionist activities became even stronger, and the chances of emigrating even more restricted. Ibid., 180.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Ibid.

[74] One of the biggest groups of Jewish agricultural workers was active during the harvest at the farm in Požár u Křivoklátu. See more Ibid., 111.

[75] Ibid., 180. "Vystěhovalectví mládeže" [Emigration of Youth], *Židovské listy*, November 24, 1939.

In order to register Jews excluded from economic life, the Jüdische Arbeitszentrale (Central Jewish Labor Office) was established in cooperation with the Jewish Religious Community. The goal was to record the occupation profile of men aged 18-50 years and provide them with work assignments, since Jews could not get unemployment benefits. Soon after that, unemployed Jews would get jobs in road and railway construction, industrial companies, forestry, etc. "Medical examinations of physical abilities served as a basis for a work assignment; the Central Jewish Labor Office provided it by order of the Central Office for Jewish Emigration in Prague, the Imperial Protector of Bohemia and Moravia, and the Ministry of Social and Health Care."[76] Since there was an effort to offer emigration to adults too, vocational training centers were also opened to them, especially to intellectuals. Participants were trained in many disciplines and got acquainted with emigration procedure as well.[77]

The Jewish Help for Youth assisted the age group from 12 to 17 years in Prague and Brno and trained them for emigration. In these cities Aliyah Schools were established in cooperation with the Jewish Religious Community. The Jewish Help for Youth also helped some of the participants move abroad to Denmark after hachsharah training.[78]

From 1939, the young people's aliyah was also reported in *Židovské listy* (Jewish Papers):[79] "[...] On the immigration of young people aged 15-17 years old to Eretz Israel: Young people live there in groups of 20 to 40 members and work for about 6 hours a day. In addition, they receive general and theoretical vocational training."[80] The text goes on: "The first step is registration [...]. Registration also includes a medical examination by our trusted doctors. The final selection takes place in four-week preparatory camps. The condition for 'aliyah' is a certificate of

[76] Ibid., 106.

[77] Ibid., 180.

[78] Ibid.

[79] *Jewish Papers* was published from 1939 and was the most important journal for Jews, since all the new Nazi orders and regulations were announced there. It also printed advice and practical information about the organization of social and medical help, vocational training, working opportunities, etc.

[80] "Alija mládeže" [Youth Aliyah], *Židovské listy*, December 1, 1939.

participation in this camp and a medical certificate." For those not sent to aliyah immediately, vocational training is organized.[81]

As pointed out by Radka Šustrová, "A healthy population was one of the central bio-political goals of modern states, and it was also a crucial factor for Nazism during its expansion and the building of the Nazi state."[82] The fact that Nazism was obsessed with the discourse of national health and eugenics was not in contradiction with its destructive methods.[83] However, medical examination of the population in the Protectorate is outside the scope and topic of this text.[84] Although the Jewish and Roma population were under the scrutiny of Nazi authorities in an even stricter way than the Czech population, for the purpose of this work I will focus on the medical tests mentioned in connection with hachsharah training activities only. I will leave aside medical testing of the Jewish population in the Protectorate that appeared to assess their labor value; I am going to quote memoirs on the hachsharot instead.

Calls to retrain and leave aimed at the Jewish youth to fulfill the Zionist goal of social and economic re-stratification of the Jewish population were widely announced on the pages of *Židovské listy*. It was prominent, for example, in the long article "Hachšará - Duševní a tělesná příprava Hechalucu" (Hachsharah - Mental and Physical Training of He-Halutz), which analyses a shift in the membership base and in camp organization.

> The former composition of the hachsharah was characterized by the fact that it mainly consisted of *haverim*, who came from the eastern part of the former republic, and only a tiny part consisted of *haverim* originally from Bohemia and Moravia, primarily people from the youth movements. [...] The *haverim* from the East, mainly the Jewish poor, are slowly becoming the minority in our *hachsharot*. Instead, new *haverim* are coming from the West. They were partly Zionists before, partly not, but have been taught

[81] Ibid.

[82] Radka Šustrová, *Zastřené počátky sociálního státu. Nacionalismus a sociální politika v protektorátu Čechy a Morava* [Ambiguous Origins of the Welfare State. Nationalism and Social Policy in Bohemia and Moravia] (Praha: Argo - MÚA, 2020), 277.

[83] Ibid., 277-343.

[84] Chad Bryant, *Prague in Black: Nazi Rule and Czech Nationalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 139-178.

> recently that Zionism is not a theoretical question but a practical one that they must carry out.[85]

The article further mentions the problem of the poor physical condition of the youth in the hachsharot, something often mentioned also in witnesses' testimonies. The lack of farms where young people could be retrained through hard work for Eretz and social and economic re-stratification stressed the need to increase efforts to achieve young Jews' aliyah. Therefore, it was announced that hachsharot would be operative the whole year, and not just in the summer or at harvest time. Those who underwent hachsharah training were supposed to be sent directly to Palestine to make aliyah or abroad for further retraining, most often to Denmark, as already mentioned. The possibility of an expansion of the program and further cooperation was negotiated with Sweden and the Netherlands. The article warns that all new members must undergo and pass a thorough medical examination.[86]

The issue of the health status of the participants remained crucial for hachsharot programs. As in the pre-war period, great emphasis was put on the health of those participants who considered emigration to Palestine seriously. Especially at the beginning of the war, this topic was widely stressed. In the Jewish press, young people were warned not to conceal their actual health conditions, and articles about suitable and unsuitable candidates for emigration were issued with some frequency.[87] In the article titled "Zdraví lidé – zdravá budoucnost" (Healthy People – A Healthy Future) published in *Židovské listy*, we can find the following warning:

> Certainly, the sudden re-emergence of a businessman or intellectual who did not perform any physical work until arrival to Eretz is associated with many difficulties. The weak body gets tired quickly, there are signs of muscle and heart disorders, and mental depression, which adversely affects the physical condition; it is common. However, the best way to overcome

[85] "Hachšará – Duševní a tělesná příprava Hechalucu" [Hachsharah – Mental and Physical Training of He-Halutz], *Židovské listy*, December 1, 1939.

[86] Ibid.

[87] "Zdraví a vystěhovalectví I" [Health and Emigration I, *Židovské listy,* December 22, 1939.

> this fear is *hachsharah*, systematic retraining, and getting used to physical work already in Galut [...]. Of course, the basic premise is that people with diseases are excluded from the hachsharah.[88]

A similar article was written about the importance of occupational hygiene, physicians and statistics for hachsharah training. "There are quite a few people who do not belong to gainful employment, but rather to an old people's home, hospital, or other institutional care. And we have already recommended many of them to go to the hospital instead of joining the course," concludes the author of the article, M.D. Otto Šťastný.[89]

Before making aliyah, young Jews filled an in-depth questionnaire requesting personal information. Alongside questions on actual health conditions, applicants' skills were examined too: knowledge of foreign languages (especially Hebrew), the desired form of employment and abilities, eligibility to particular professions, but also the family's financial situation, and information about candidates' relatives. The medical history of each applicant and his/her family was investigated too. We can find records about size, weight, bone structure, dental records, blood pressure and pulse, psychological state, etc. Similarly, as during the First Republic of Czechoslovakia, these questionnaires were submitted to the He-Halutz Department for further eligibility assessment of the applicants and enlistment into the appropriate hachsharah training.[90]

Last but not least, there were articles about the need for psycho-social control of the young people who were about to emigrate to Palestine. On the basis of a sample of 50 candidates, abilities such as "[...] understanding of technology, general skills, manual ability, practical intelligence, understanding of form and space (and much more), and psycho-technical skills," were examined.[91]

In 1939, one Oskar Fischmann wrote an article in *Jewish Papers* about the importance of retraining and doing farm work titled "Education – Retraining.

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[88] "Zdraví lidé - zdravá budoucnost" [Healthy People – A Healthy Future], *Židovské listy*, November 29, 1940.

[89] M. D., "Otto Šťastný, Lékař o správné volbě povolání" [Otto Šťastný, Doctor – About the Right Choice of Profession], *Židovské listy*, December 6, 1940.

[90] Questionnaire of the He-Halutz Office for those interested in Hachsharah Training, 1939, Documents of Persecution, AŽMP.

[91] "Školství - Přeškolování" [Education - Retraining], *Židovské listy*, December 29, 1939.

Retraining for Agricultural Workers." He perceived agriculture as the only job opportunity for immigrants in most overseas countries. At the same time, he wrote about the foundation of an institute, in the Troja district of Prague and under the supervision of the Social Department of the Jewish Community, to retrain for agricultural and similar professions. On the one hand, Fischmann reported that the local training farm offered participants 160 hectares of land, cows, horses, pigs, and theoretical and practical training. On the other, he specified that

> [...] the prospective farmer must have a firm plan for the future; in addition to goodwill and intent, a farmer must be healthy and has to learn how to love his new profession. Feelings of inferiority or fear of one's helplessness must not hamper his resolve. [...] The emigrant strengthens his body, learns how to handle and love the soil, knows animals, tools and instruments and thus gains self-confidence.[92]

However, it is not entirely clear to what extent these medical certificates were an integral part of the Nazi interest in health and medical research—as requested by the Imperial Protector of Bohemia and Moravia and The Ministry of Social and Health Care—or if Zionists had not yet given up on the concept of a strong and healthy Jewish national and individual body, or both. Later on, it will become clear that Zionists had not ceased their appeals to Jews to foster physical strength and focus on a productive form of employment in Palestine.

One of the retraining camps most often mentioned in, and best described by documents and oral history testimonies, was the Lípa farm near Německý Brod. In the summer of 1940 the camp had been well equipped by the Jewish Labor Office for the vocational training of Jewish youth.[93] According to a Report of the Jewish Religious Community from 1942, its capacity was 400 beds, and it had a dining and living space, a kitchen, workshops, offices, a doctor's office, and a fire patrol room. The retraining camp was supervised by the Central Office for Jewish Emigration. The daily routine had a precise schedule, from getting up in the

[92] "Dipl. Agr. Oskar Fischmann: Školství – Přeškolování. Přeškolování na zemědělce" [Education – Retraining. Retraining for Agricultural Workers], *Židovské listy*, December 15, 1939.

[93] Krejčová, Svobodová, and Hyndráková, *Die Juden*, 108-110 and 115-116.

morning, to the lunch break, the evening roll-call, and rules governing participants' free time. The young participants were assigned to fieldwork and ancillary work, working in the garden, in the woods, in workshops and in stables, and they took care of the administration of the farm.[94]
Several witnesses recall their participation in agricultural work/hachsharot during wartime, among them Mr. R.S.:

> The university was closed [...], so we were grouped. To found a group of Jewish academics was our initiative, and we found a farm in Lhotsko na Hané, where we were registered as workers. [...] It wasn't a *hachsharah*; we were there as a bunch of people. But it became a *hachsharah* later on. Someone from He-Halutz came there and turned us into a *hachsharah* group.[95]

The witness further describes the size of their group, numbering 25-30 members, and how they how they joined He-Halutz in Brno and Prague, where Tchelet Lavan operated as a representative of the whole He-Halutz. As part of his activities, he worked in the Lípa farm, a hachsharah that was, in fact, "a retraining camp under the code name *hachsharah*."[96]
Another witness, one of the organizers of Aliyat HaNoar, recalls his participation in the hachsharah in Černá nad Orlicí and the Jews' relationship with the farmer:

> [...] It was such an intellectual group [...]. Nobody led that. It was a completely free collective of Mr. Jansa's slaves. Jansa was a farmer, and he knew how to use us very well [...]. We worked as we should, from early morning to night. Officially, working hours in agriculture were ten hours, unlike in industry. There was an extra hour, eleven hours during the war, and whoever worked with horses or cows as a milkmaid and feeder had to add two hours to clean and feed the animals. Since the Jews were forced to wear a Jewish star, Mr. Jansa said: "Jews, and beards, and all that, it won't be with me!" [...] Those people in the Orlické Mountains are a particular

[94] Ibid., 115-116.
[95] Testimony no. 952, R.S., Oral History Collection, AŽMP.
[96] Ibid.

> race of decent people. And when we left, not only Jansa, but the people from the whole area went with us, waved, and cried.[97]

It is unclear what the testimony meant by referring to Jansa's comment on Jewish beards and "all that," one can only assume it was the farmer's way to articulate his disagreement with the public labeling of Jews. Memories of the work on farms, from where young people were often deported directly to Terezín, reflect many aspects of daily life and the relationship with the non-Jewish population.

> He-Halutz made contracts with every farmer. We had a representative and a salary. We were paid like everyone else. Now it occurs to me that the other workers, non-Jews, behaved absolutely wonderfully. We really couldn't work, and there was no way they didn't go into our line, for example, with beets, and they didn't help us get to the end faster. They behaved amazingly [...].[98]

Such relationships are also remarked upon in another testimony in relation to a farm in Vacanovice na Hané:

> As a young man, one takes everything with humor, [...] the young landowner was nice to us, the old one was yelling at us that he will get a star on the building, and people will shout that it is a Jewish house and so on. We were hosted by all the peasants in the village, and there was terrible trouble. Those people took farm work for granted, and we didn't understand it at all. I remember we were at a farmhouse [...], and we planted potatoes badly, we didn't even know they had to be planting with sprouts up, and the potatoes didn't germinate at all [...].[99]

Recollections of the inability to do agricultural works properly and participants' physical weakness start appearing in testimonies from the very beginning of training camps' activities. The Central Zionist Office – Palestinian Office was

[97] Testimony no. 82, G.W., Oral History Collection, AŽMP.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Testimony No. 119, E.D., Oral History Collection, AŽMP.

suddenly abolished on May 10, 1941, "because it had no agenda."[100] Even though retraining centers still continued their programs by inertia, testimonies reflect other changes that affected their activities and the organization of the hachsharot*:* the so-called Heydrichiada,[101] the increasing number of Jewish deportations and the gradual end of vocational training and the hachsharot themselves.
In the testimony of one of the organizers of hachsharot in 1939-1940, Mr. D.H., we can read:

> We worked for food only. [...] We had many problems; Jews never worked in agriculture, it was hard work, and we also had issues with landowners who did not give us enough food. There were also problems because Jews were no longer allowed to travel. [...] When Heydrich was assassinated in 1942, landowners were afraid to employ Jews. I drove from one to the other and asked if they would still use Jews – they didn't want to.[102]

Unfortunately, even to determine the locations of all the hachsharot and retraining centers operating under the He-Halutz department in the interwar period and at the beginning of the Second World War is not possible. Some of them are well documented; others we can trace from mentions and testimonies of the movements' former members. However, locating them is not within the scope of this text.[103]

Conclusion

The article has tried to offer an insight into the programs and structure of the hachsharot during the period of the First Republic of Czechoslovakia and the first war years. It focused on the question of building a chosen body, a cult of body-

[100] Krejčová, Svobodová, and Hyndráková, *Die Juden*, 178.
[101] The period following the assassination of the Protector of Bohemia and Moravia Reinhard Heydrich in May 1942.
[102] Testimony no. 504, D.H., Oral History Collection, AŽMP.
[103] Daniela Bartáková, "Mapping the Hachshara Trainning Centers in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia," *EHRI. Document Blog*. Accessed November 1, 2021, https://blog.ehri-project.eu/2020/05/19/mapping-hakhshara-training-centers/.

building and corporeality. Jewish pioneers and scouts organized their activities to fulfill the political, cultural, and ideological goals of Socialist Zionism. Among other activities, they learned Hebrew and organized lectures on the history of Zionism and socialism. Above all, these movements were active in the practical implementation of the training centers—hachsharot, and in the organization of emigration to Palestine—aliyah.

Last but not least, these movements became active agents of the concept of building a chosen national body at the individual and collective levels. On this point, however, there was a significant difference between theory and reality. Based on the preserved materials, documents, press articles, and testimonies, it is pretty clear that the movements paid considerable attention to the issue of health and body cultivation in both the pre-war and war periods. It must be admitted, though, that a lot of the didactic material and the questionnaires had an advisory character, and we do not know what its real impact was on the emigration of young people.

So far, we can only estimate the absolute number of those who emigrated to Palestine. Still, witnesses' memoirs and surviving documents show that many young participants in Zionist movements and hachsharot perceived their activities as just a holiday and a collective adventure. This changed during the war, since participation in retraining courses and hachsharot became a necessary precondition for those who wanted to escape from Nazism. The Jewish Community in Prague immediately reacted to this need and organized vocational training camps with higher frequency and in many more places. Although health requirements were still stressed in newspapers and the medical records of candidates filled in by doctors and training centers leaders, Zionists focused their activities on enabling the emigration of as many candidates as possible.

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Keywords: Aliyah, Body, Hachsharah, Jews, Youth, Zionism

How to quote this article:
Daniela Bartáková, "*Hachsharah* Training Centers in Czechoslovakia and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia," in "Training for *Aliyah*: Young Jews in *Hachsharot* across Europe between the 1930s and late 1940s," eds. Verena Buser and Chiara Renzo, *Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History. Journal of the Fondazione CDEC* 21, no. 1 (2022), DOI: 10.48248/issn.2037-741X/13304

Hachsharot in Greece, 1945-1949: Camps or Vocational Centers?

by *Kateřina Králová*

Abstract

Drawing on rich and eloquent sources, both institutional and personal, this article outlines how internal documents of the American Joint Distribution Committee, press reports, and personal testimonies present vocational training in the hachsharot *for Jewish survivors of the Holocaust in Greece. How do these sources communicate with each other, and what problems are they silent about? Through their close examination, I seek to paint a more accurate picture beyond the Zionist idea of* aliyah *and to interconnect Holocaust survivors' attempts to move from Greece to Palestine with the Greek Civil War, the Cold War, and the situation in the Middle East. To this end, I analyze the attitudes of local and transnational actors as well as personal recollections of the multifold postwar experience of these vocational training centers in Greece.*

Introduction*

On October 11, 1944, German troops, which had occupied Greece in April 1941, left Athens for good. After four years of war, Jews in Greece who survived in hiding or by joining the leftist resistance finally felt free again; they would attend a synagogue service and pray for the return of the deportees who were still missing. It took another year and a half before the last of the Nazi camps' survivors crossed the border back into Greece. The newly established Central Board, representing all Jews and Jewish Communities in Greece, gave its final tally of the number of Jewish survivors in Greece as 10,027.[1] This number made it clear that 87 percent of the Jews of Greece had been murdered in the Holocaust, a very high percentage even compared to the rest of Europe.

For Jews in Greece, the autumn of 1944 thus turned out to be less joyful than one would expect for a country just freed from German, Bulgarian and, until September 1943, Italian occupation. Not only did they lose most of their loved ones, but before long, political tensions erupted again in yet another conflict. This time it was the civil war (1946-1949), the impact and the massive power shift of which would be felt in all of Greece for decades to come. Within less than ten years, despite the postwar baby boom among Holocaust survivors, the number of Jews in Greece dropped by half, as most of them moved to the land of Israel.[2] As early as the summer of 1945, hundreds of them joined vocational training activities in the newly established greenfield projects of the *hachsharot*. While some survivors, namely 175 Jewish children from Greece that had been declared orphans, accompanied by 25 adults (parents or guardians), plus 39 Jews from Bulgaria, were

* This research was possible thanks to my tenure at the Humboldt University in Berlin as an Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung research fellow in 2021/22. Thanks to to Megan Nagel and Marc Raymond Lange for editing this paper. I am also thankful for the invaluable feedback from my colleagues who read the manuscript.

[1] KIS to the Central British Fund for Jewish Relief and Rehabilitation, February 24, 1946, Selected records of the Central Board of Jewish Communities (KIS) Athens, Greece, KIS 0127, RG-45.010, USHMM, Washington DC.

[2] Report, April 9, 1946, KIS 0096 and Report, August 18, 1967, KIS 0214, RG-45.010, USHMM. See also Adina Weiss Liberles, "The Jewish Community of Greece," in *The Balkan Jewish communities: Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Greece, and Turkey*, ed. Daniel J. Elazar (Lanham: University Press of America-Center for Jewish Community Studies of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 1984), 106.

allowed to leave the country in summer 1945 with the official approval of Greek and British authorities, others relied on the semi-legal practices of mostly Jewish organizations, both local and international.[3]

Postwar Greece remained under British patronage until 1947, thus putting Greek sovereignty in question. In these circumstances, creating and establishing a vocational training camp for Jews to resettle them in Mandatory Palestine was a tricky business, as it went against Downing Street's official policy. Regarding postwar Palestine, it was again the British, and their wartime Western allies under the umbrella of the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF), who dictated the terms and conditions of Jewish immigration and they were reluctant to increase the quotas for Jewish immigrants. Aware of the fact that newly liberated Italy and Greece were hardly interested in regulating Jewish attempts to cross the Mediterranean, British policymakers failed to persuade the governments in Rome and Athens to put a halt on these trips. The direct engagement of international welfare organizations, such as the United Nations' Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) and the American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), further hindered their endeavors.[4]

Nonetheless, I argue that in Greece the parties involved readily supported the Zionist cause at the local level, not primarily out of sympathy for Zionism, but as an effective narrative framing for the relocation of Holocaust survivors. Although some organizations involved in the resettlement process avoided publicity for the sake of political consensus, especially with the British, others competed in taking credit for the organization of *aliyah*, the Jewish "repatriation" to the land of Israel. While the JDC, that supported financially the hachsharot in Greece, kept a low public profile, its internal records are an invaluable source on the actual situation in the vocational training camps. Examples of the photographic documentation

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[3] Jews who left Greece for Palestine on 8/4/45, Registration of Liberated Former Persecutees at Various Locations 3.1.1.3/001-0197_78779776_0_1–78779789_0_1, International Tracing Service (ITS) collection, Bad Arolsen archives, accessed at the USHMM. On this group, see also Karina Lampsa and Iakov Sibi, *I zoi ap' tin archi: i metanasteusi ton ellinon Evreon stin Palestini (1945-1948)* [Life from the beginning: The emigration of Greek Jews to Palestine, 1945-48] (Athens: Alexandria, 2010), 194-198, and Pothiti Hantzaroula, *Child Survivors of the Holocaust in Greece: Memory, Testimony and Subjectivity* (Abingdon-New York: Routledge, 2021), 100-101.

[4] Arieh J. Kochavi, *Post-Holocaust Politics: Britain, the United States, and Jewish Refugees, 1945-1948* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 245-249.

taken in Athens at the time provide a picture of both the state of the facilities and the people in it. Finally, personal testimonies of Jews who went through the hachsharot, even if limited in number and in the space they dedicated to the hachsharot, demonstrate their perception of the transition camps and their emotions connected to aliyah.

Apart from the political conditions, I focus in my article on the discourses around the actual goals and living conditions in the hachsharot in Greece between 1945 and 1949, i.e., the entire period of their existence. I further analyze the personal testimonies of the Holocaust survivors, many of them ex-deportees, and their motivation to do aliyah. Was it commitment to Zionism that triggered Jewish migration from Greece? And was a *hachsharah* an example of the survivors' expectations of a new beginning, or rather a somber reminder of what they had experienced under occupation? To answer these questions, JDC archival documents on this period were particularly useful. The interview with Gaynor Jacobson, the JDC country director in Greece that established the hachsharot in 1945, sheds new light not only on the JDC but also on his personal role in this endeavor.[5] Until recently, many of these sources remained unstudied since a comprehensive research on the hachsharot in Greece has yet to be carried out.[6] Even though postwar Greece attracted Jews from countries such as Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria,[7] a topic still awaiting systematic research analysis, in this article I decided to limit my scope to the Jews from Greece, since they were at the main focus of interest in my sources.[8]

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[5] Oral history interview with Gaynor I. Jacobson, conducted by Tad Szulc (1988), RG-50.968.0032, USHMM.

[6] In contrast with the growing body of literature on DP camps, ever since Mark Wyman' *DP: Europe's displaced persons, 1945-1951* (Philadelphia: Balch Institute Press, 1989), the Greek case is represented by a single chapter in Rika Benveniste's *Die Überlebenden: Widerstand, Deportation, Rückkehr: Juden aus Thessaloniki in den 1940er Jahren* (Berlin: Edition Romiosini, 2016), 131-228. With the exception of a few pages in Lampsa and Sibi, themselves mostly a translation of the IRC document analyzed here, the hachsharot in Greece? have so far remained outside scholarly attention. Lampsa and Sibi, *I zoi ap' tin archi*, 198-211.

[7] On the so-called "Greek period," when Jews travelled through Europe pretending to be Greek, see, e.g., Kochavi, *Post-Holocaust Politics*, 172.

[8] Although Greece was regarded as an important transition center in the wake of the anti-Jewish measures in Germany, especially in the late 1930s, before the outbreak of World War II, during and after the war Jewish migration from Europe shifted to other Mediterranean countries in Europe, such as Portugal, Italy, France, Romania, Turkey and Yugoslavia. See Dalia Ofer, *Escaping from*

Public Representation vs. Internal Documents on *Hachsharot* in Greece

During the interwar period, which seemed like a distant past in the mid-1940s, there had been an increase in Jewish migration, with around 3,000 Jews moving from Greece to Palestine,[9] due mainly to the Zionist movement's efforts and the dire economic situation in Greece.[10] Back then, Jews from Greece settled mostly in the Sephardic communities of Jaffa, Tel Aviv, Akko and Haifa, which quickly developed into modern Middle Eastern ports. In Tel Aviv there was a Greek Zionist Club, Kadima, and in 1936 a cooperative agricultural settlement called Moshav Tzur Moshe was established in Netanya by Jews from Thessaloniki and Kastoria.[11] Organized by Abba Hushi, the leader of the Zionist labor federation and the postwar mayor of Haifa, these large transfers of Jewish immigrants from Greece were the result of persistent recruitment, targeting especially precarious laborers, such as the dockworkers in Thessaloniki. The organization of aliyah was supervised by Moshe Sharett (Shertok), the head of the Jewish Agency's political department and one of the top representatives of the Yishuv, the Jewish residents in Palestine.[12] Sharett remained in his position throughout the war and organized the aliyah of Holocaust survivors in its aftermath. Thus, the Jewish Agency's

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the Holocaust: Illegal Immigration to the Land of Israel, 1939-1944 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

[9] Katherine E. Fleming, *Greece – A Jewish History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 237 n 70; see also the statistics in *The American Jewish Year Book*, vol. 39 (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1938), 780. Accessed April 1, 2022, http://ajcarchives.org/main.php.

[10] Mark Mazower, *Greece and the Inter-War Economic Crisis* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991); Mogens Pelt, *Tobacco, Arms and Politics: Greece and Germany from World Crisis to World War 1929-41* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 1998); Athanasios Lykogiannis, *Britain and the Greek Economic Crisis, 1944-1947: From Liberation to the Truman Doctrine* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002). On the formation of Zionism in Greece see Philip Carabott, "The Great War and the coming together of Zionists in Greece, 1914-19," in *The Macedonian Front, 1915-1918: Politics, Society and Culture in Time of War*, eds. Basil Gounaris, Michael Llewellyn-Smith, and Ioannis Stefanidis (Milton: Routledge, 2022), 210-216; and Rena Molho, "The Zionist movement up to the first Panhellenic Zionist Congress," in *Salonica and Istanbul: Social, Political and Cultural Aspects of Jewish Life*, ed. Rena Molho (Istanbul: ISIS Press, 2005), 165-186.

[11] Olga Borovaya, *Modern Ladino Culture: Press, Belles Lettres, and Theater in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2011), 100.

[12] Jacob Norris, *Land of Progress: Palestine in the Age of Colonial Development, 1905-1948* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 76-77 and 123-134.

connections and the networks created by Jewish Zionists, both those in Greece and those who had left Greece for Palestine before the Nazi persecution, were already in place right after the war.[13]

As regards the Jews in Greece, it was obviously the local Zionists who from the very beginning openly supported migration to Palestine, even if clandestine. In November 1944, the Zionist Federation of Greece was officially restored, led by Robert Raphael, a staunch Zionist who had survived the war by hiding in Athens. Its branches soon appeared in all the cities in Greece where Jews were still present. Through its mouthpiece, the Bulletin of Jewish News (*Deltion Evraikion Idiseon*), the Federation pleaded for the free migration of Jews from Greece to Palestine.[14] Of course, this position found a great supporter in the first postwar president of the Central Board of the Jewish Communities and Zionist leader, Asher Moissis. A native of Trikala and a graduate of the Athens' Law School, Moissis spoke next to Judeo-Spanish and French, the dominant languages among Jews in prewar Greece, also fluent Greek and had extensive contacts in the capital and in Thessaloniki, where he had practiced law before the war. As a prominent Jewish personality in Greece, Mossis was responsible for the institutional rebuilding of the Jewish Communities in Greece and later even became honorary consul of Israel in Athens.[15]

In May 1945, the Jewish Agency officially reopened its Palestine migration office in Athens and sent its own staff to work there.[16] About a month later, the Agency found an appropriate estate in Athens and inaugurated the first hachsharah. On July 13, 1945, the Bulletin printed a report on the opening ceremony in Patisia,

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[13] Thurston Clarke, "Epilogue, August 1, 1946-1980," in *By Blood & Fire: The Attack on the King David Hotel* (New York: Putnam, 1981), 255-264; Friling, "Turkey and the Jews during the World War II," 376 and 407-416; Karina Lampsa and Iakov Sibi, *I diasosi: i siopi tou kosmou, i antistasi sta geto ke ta stratopeda, i Ellines Evrei sta chronia tis Katochis* [The Rescue. The silence of the people, the resistance in the ghettos and the camps, and the Greek Jews during the occupation] (Athens: Ekdosis Kapon, 2012), 190-206. See also Asher Moissis' personal memoir *Greek-Jewish patrimony* (North Charleston: CreateSpace, 2012), 148-151.

[14] Philip Carabott and Maria Vassilikou, "'New Men vs Old Jews': Greek Jewry in the Wake of the Shoah, 1945-1947," in *The Holocaust in Greece*, eds. Giorgos Antoniou and A. Dirk Moses (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 266-269.

[15] Raphael Moissis, preface to Moissis, *Greek-Jewish Patrimony*, iii-iv.

[16] Jewish Agency for Palestine Summary of Relief Work in Europe during 1946, 6 March 1947, Jewish Agency 1947, NY AR 1945-54/2/4/22/1730, JDC Archives, New York.

praising its creators and simultaneously contextualizing it within the history of Jewish migration from Greece to Palestine before the Nazi persecution:

This is the first time a hachsharah (agricultural preparation) operation has been undertaken in Greece. It is true that long before the war the Zionist Federation in Thessaloniki, in collaboration with the Histadrut group, had organized a hachsharah and for a few months, several Halutzim had supervised the agricultural and spiritual introduction, of whom some left for Eretz Israel.[17]

Next to the local Zionist leaders, Raphael and Moissis, representatives of the Jewish Agency, the David Magen Adom, and the JDC were present at the ceremony. After the opening speeches of the Halutzim's representatives, namely Asher Moissis, Jacob Tchernowitz, who served as the Jewish Agency's envoy to Greece, and Robert Raphael, the floor was given to Gaynor Jacobson, the JDC country director for Greece.[18]

Carabott and Vassilikou, who examined the Bulletin in depth, identify "Greek Zionists" as the most outspoken supporters of the Jewish Agency, helping Jews to move from Greece to the land of Israel. This might have been the case in Thessaloniki, which had a strong Zionist tradition, and what was left of it was organized in the local Theodor Herzl club. The main stream of potential Jewish migrants, though, headed for Athens, where the whole migratory procedure was essentially in the hands of the Jewish Agency and the JDC.[19] The scant research done by Greek historians does not really address the role that the JDC played in this effort, which I wish to bring into focus here.

Presenting itself as a nonsectarian and apolitical relief organization with the main aim of assisting Holocaust survivors in rebuilding their communities, JDC officially downplayed both its ideological and material support of aliyah. Such a position was crucial to maintaining the status quo between the United States as a rising world power and the declining British Empire.[20] Since rivalries among the

[17] "Ta egkenia tis Achsara" (Inauguration of the hachsharah), *Deltio Evraikion Idiseon*, July 13, 1945, 5.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Lampsa and Sibi, *I zoi ap' tin archi*, 204.

[20] Avinoam Patt, Atina Grossmann, Linda G. Levi, and Maud S. Mandel, "Introduction," in *The JDC at 100: A Century of Humanitarianism* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2019), 12-13;

international relief organizations and the Jewish survival groups themselves were omnipresent, finger-pointing and verbal attacks made their way into the organizations' internal reports, the Greek authorities' records, and occasionally even into Jewish newspapers. Although such tensions soon appeared in most countries in postwar Europe, in Greece—the second country after Italy in which the JDC started operating—the situation was different.[21] As Gaynor Jacobson stated, unlike in Italy, "the total work of relief and rehabilitation [was] shouldered by UNRRA and directly administered by the Government of the country."[22] Therefore, each JDC project had to be submitted for review and approved by UNRRA and comply with its policy of equal opportunities in providing assistance, regardless of ethnic, religious or political belonging, a condition difficult to meet for the hachsharot.

For this reason, perhaps, the JDC practically never appears in the records of the Greek Foreign Ministry in connection with organizing Jewish migration to Palestine. When featured in the domestic or international press, as in the interview with the JDC country director Gaynor Jacobson for a Belgian magazine, the hachsharot were portrayed not as transit camps for aliyah but as agricultural training schools established by the Jewish Agency and maintained by the JDC.[23] Only in its first year, such support cost the JDC about 175,000 USD, with half of that sum being paid as subsidies to the migrants (20 USD per person/month).[24]

From the very beginning, the Jewish Agency for Palestine became the most prominent external nonprofit organization mentioned in regard to hachsharot in Greece. Soon it decided to expand its original number of two local emissaries to

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Eliana Hadjisavvas, " 'From Dachau to Cyprus': Jewish Refugees and the Cyprus Internment Camps – Relief and Rehabilitation, 1946-1949," in *Beyond Camps and Forced Labour: Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference*, eds. Suzanne Bardgett, Christine Schmidt, and Dan Stone (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 148-149.

[21] For Italy, see Guri Schwarz, *After Mussolini: Jewish Life and Jewish Memories in Post-Fascist Italy* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2012), 35-39.

[22] The American Joint Distribution Committee's Program Greece, April 27th - June 30th, 1945, 1 August 1945, Greece, General, I.-VII. 1945, NY AR1945-54/4/33/2/387, JDC Archives, New York.

[23] Article to be printed in "OFFI PRESS," see Letter from Israel G. Jacobson to Moses A. Leavitt, Subject: Article for the Press, September 25, 1945, Greece, General, VIII.-XII.1945, NY AR 1945-54/4/33/2/386, JDC Archives, New York.

[24] "Greece," April 30, 1946, Greece, General, 1946-1948, NY AR 1945-54/4/33/2/385; "Salonika, Fieldtrip December 2nd - 6th, 1945," Letter from Israel G. Jacobson to Mr. Leavitt, December 17, 1945, Greece, General, VIII.-XII.1945, NY AR 1945-54/4/33/2/386, JDC Archives, New York.

three. On the basis of an agreement of September 1944, the Jewish Agency units to arrive in Greece were subordinated to UNRRA.[25] This lasted until the summer of 1947, when the organization closed its activities and consequently ceased to exist. During his visit to Athens, Moshe Sharett, head of the Jewish Agency's political department, negotiated on the continued existence of the hachsharot. The manner in which the proposal was put forward to the Greek Prime Minister in April 1945, with agriculture and minors clearly placed at the forefront, is quite telling. The Prime Minister office reported that:

Mr. Shertok called for moral support of the [Greek] Government in providing training in farm work for young Greek Jews so as to enable them to move to Palestine with farming experience and contribute to the development of agriculture there. In this respect, the Greek Government could propose to UNRRA that facilities (in the form of farming implements, seeds, etc.) given to the Jewish children being educated as above for the purpose.[26]

This was immediately followed by internal Jewish Agency and JDC reports that reveal that education and agriculture were rather secondary.
Two Jewish medical welfare teams sent by the Magen David Adom from Palestine, 35 people overall, started their service in Greece in June 1945, operating all over Greece and in the hachsharot. At that point two hachsharot were established, one in Patisia in the vicinity of central Athens and another one in Thessaloniki at the American Agricultural School, both working in close cooperation with the main JDC office in Athens. About half a year later, a Jewish Agency report on its relief work in Greece described its achievements (including the establishment of one additional hachsharah on the outskirts of Athens) and, above all, its impact on local public opinion, overly optimistically: "The attitude towards Palestine in that country [Greece] today," it says, "is more positive than anywhere else."[27]

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[25] Jewish Agency for Palestine Summary of Relief Work in Europe during 1946, March 6, 1947, Jewish Agency, 1947, NY AR 1945-54/2/4/22/1730, JDC Archives, New York.

[26] Quote from Photini Constantopoulou and Thanos Veremis, eds., *Documents on the History of the Greek Jews: Records from Historical Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs* (Athens: Kastaniotis Editions, 1998), 319.

[27] Quote from Jewish Agency for Palestine Summary of Relief Work in Europe during 1946, March 6, 1947, Jewish Agency 1947, 1945-1954, NY AR 1945-54/2/4/22/1730; see also The American

Although one can only speculate about the true nature of Greek support for Jewish resettlement, the idea of philo-Semitism was readily embraced by the Greek Foreign Ministry, as shown by its Historical Archives. Its 1998 collection of selected documents on Jews in Greece clearly supports the Greek hegemonic narrative of hospitality and Greek-Jewish solidarity, more for political reasons than for historical accuracy. The volume reveals, for example, how it did not escape the attention of the ministry that the Greek government's attitude towards aliyah was praised in Palestine, another opportunity to highlight Greek exceptionalism and superiority in regard to the Jewish cause, especially in the context of Southeastern Europe. According to a press release issued by the Greek Consulate in Jerusalem in September 1945, "the Greek Government is the only administration in the Balkans which is favorably inclined towards Zionism and which has assisted the Zionists in an entirely exemplary manner."[28]

Although similar strategies, such as embellishing the attitude of Greek central authorities towards Jews and displaying Jewish commitment towards Greece, were typical in those days of both Jewish Communities in Greece and the Jews of Greece who had left the country, Greek policy towards the land of Israel was actually fairly restrained in its support. In his eminent historical research, Amikam Nahmani highlights that in 1948, in the middle of the Greek Civil War and the Israeli War of Independence, Greece interrupted all supply transfers to the land of Israel. In 1949 and later, Athens sided with its strategic partners in the Middle East, voted against the admission of the newly created State of Israel to several international organizations and abstained from voting on its membership in the United Nations.[29] Although Greece formally recognized the State of Israel in 1990, Greek public opinion in regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict has remained consistently pro-Arab.[30] In such a constellation, the Zionists, as visible promoters of aliyah, came

Joint Distribution Committee's Program Greece, April 27 - June 30, 1945, August 1, 1945, Greece, General, I.-VII. 1945, NY AR 1945-54/4/33/2/387, JDC Archives, New York.

[28] Constantopoulou and Veremis, *Documents on the History of the Greek Jews*, 340.

[29] Amikam Nachmani, *Israel, Turkey, and Greece: Uneasy Relations in the East Mediterranean* (London-Totowa, NJ: F. Cass, 1987), 89.

[30] Andreas Stergiou, " 'The struggle for the past': Socialists against Communists in Post-junta Greece," in *Aspekte neugriechischer Geschichte: Gesammelte Aufsätze*, ed. Heinz Richter (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2018), 123; George N. Tzogopoulos, "Why Is Israel's Image Improving in Greece?," *BESA Center Perspectives Paper 625* (2017). Accessed June 1, 2002, http://www.jstor.com/stable/resrep04448.

in handy for both officially impartial international organizations and Greek officials that strategically kept out of this business.

Operating *Hachsharot* in Greece: From Optimism to Decline

At the hachsharah opening ceremony in Patisia, in early July 1945, Gaynor Jacobson stated on behalf of the JDC that "it is only there that the Zionist ideology is cultivated and the hearts are formed and the arenas are created, and therefore a positive and inextricable creation takes place. The work of the Hachshara," said Jacobson, "must be supported by all the people who are convinced that the Jewish people will be able to be saved by their close contact with the soil."[31] When Morris Laub, who had served in Greece with UNRRA during World War II and became a JDC employee in July 1944, visited Jacobson in the summer of 1945, he delivered to the JDC Headquarters a report on his stay in Athens, in which he pointed to the hachsharot as one of the most promising projects. In line with the apolitical rhetoric of the JDC, Laub further reported that there, "young men and women receive vocational and cultural education preparatory to their emigration to Palestine."[32]

From the very beginning of their existence, hachsharot in Greece were sought out primarily by survivors of the Nazi camps, deported in 1943 to Auschwitz from the country's largest Jewish Community in Thessaloniki, many of them lacking basic formal education as a result of persecution. This fact was repeatedly put on the agenda by the JDC, especially when the Jewish Community in Thessaloniki demanded its allowances to be increased. The JDC then argued that while about 1,500 out of the 54,000 deportees had survived and returned to Greece, hundreds of them were being taken care of in the hachsharot. For this reason, JDC refused to rise its grants to Thessaloniki but rather continued supporting hachsharot as much as it could.[33]

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[31] "Ta egkenia tis Achsara," *Deltio Evraikion Idiseon*, July 13, 1945, 5.

[32] Letter from Morris Laub to Dr. J. Schwertz [sic], Re: Greece, August 23, 1945, Greece, General, VIII.-XII.1945, NY AR 1945-54/4/33/2/386, JDC Archives, New york.

[33] "Salonika, Fieldtrip December 2 - 6, 1945," Letter from Israel G. Jacobson to Mr. Leavitt, December 17, 1945, Greece, General, VIII.-XII.1945, NY AR 1945-54/4/33/2/386, JDC Archives, New York.

It was not exclusively the job of the JDC to take care of the hachsharot and its residents. While some food was provided by the Greek Red Cross, the Jewish Community in Athens supplied fuel and vegetables. For sick and pregnant women, the ICRC helped out with milk, a commodity scarce all over war-thorn Greece and postwar Europe in general. In the hachsharot survivors engaged in activities such as refurbishing the place, taking classes by qualified members of their community, and plowing and cultivating the land at their disposal, but no help was sufficient to change the unsettled condition in which camp survivors found themselves, stripped of any possessions and deprived of their families. Since nothing was holding them back, their main goal and desire were to leave Greece.[34] The hierarchy applied in the *hachsharot* to maintain order the lack of natural age diversity, since in Greece families were not allowed to join these facilities, as well as the disproportion of men and women, all somehow resembled incarceration in the Nazi camps. On top of that, during 1945, the hopes to reach Palestine were fulfilled for only 251 Jews from Greece, the ones on board the *Gabriella* (40) and the *Berl Katznelson* (211).[35]

There was also a difference in how the hachsharot were physically arranged. According to the picture presented by the ICRC delegate in Athens, André Lambert, who visited the two hachsharot in Athens in January 1946, the main problem of the first one in Patisia, on the Tsakonas estate, was space:

The Patisia camp could have been quite well arranged. Once repaired, the small houses will become very habitable. Kitchen, refectory, storage room, it is all very well arranged. The dorms too. Everything is perfectly well kept in order and neatness. However, I must point out that the dormitories are too small for the number of people accommodated there who are piled one on top of the other.

[34] Comité International de la Croix Rouge—Genève, "Rapport relative aux camps Israelites dans les environs d'Athènes et intitules: 'Camps de Transit'," February 28, 1946, The World Jewish Congress Geneva Office records, RG-68.045M, Reel 54, USHMM, Washington DC.

[35] Lampsa and Sibi, *I zoi ap' tin archi*, 214-219. Jewish children left for Mandatory Palestine on August 4, 1945, on board the "Empire Petrol," Ibid., 194.

This presents a serious drawback, especially for hygiene, and it is unfortunately very difficult to remodel.[36]

Although the black-and-white JDC photographs taken in summer 1946 in the Patisia hachsharah in Athens show its young residents as a cheerful group of men and women, some of them dressed according to their occupations (nurses, workers, laundry women), it is evident that the site was still in the making. Except for one picture with a line of small one-story houses, residents had to live in tents in the field and the main hall seemed to be still under construction.[37] A group photograph that should portray all hachsharah residents must feature over a hundred trainees, comparable with the written report and the names list of the Jews living in Patisia and Frankoklisia prepared by the ICRC in mid-January 1946, most probably on the same occasion. Out of 214 Jews, all of them with a domicile of origin in Greece, only 62 did not have a number tattooed on their forearm, meaning the rest survived Auschwitz. The absolute majority of the residents between 16 and 37 years of age indicated Thessaloniki as their hometown, followed by 39 from Athens and 16 from Corfu. Other Jewish Communities of prewar Greece, including Ioanina, Kastoria, Kavalla, Didimotycho, Larissa, Volos, Patra, were represented in even lower numbers.[38]

According to the written report from early 1946, Patisia sheltered 139 Jews (24 women), while the second hachsharah in Athens, Frankoklisia, established in autumn 1945, became a temporary home for 127 Jews (37 women).[39] At that time, there were about 60 trainees in the Thessaloniki hachsharah, most of them—

[36] Comite International de la Croix Rouge - Geneve, "Rapport relatif aux camps israélites situés dans les environs d'Athènes et intitulés: 'Camps de Transit'." February 28, 1946, The World Jewish Congress Geneva Office records, RG-68.045M, Reel 54, USHMM, Washington DC.

[37] Thirteen photographs on the *hachsharah* in Athens from c. July 1946, NY_20001-3, 20005-13, 20015, JDC Archives, New York.

[38] List of Members of the Hachsharaoth "Patissia" and "Frankoklissia" on the 15.1.46, Registration of Liberated Former Persecutees at Various Locations 3.1.1.3/0015_78779800_1, 78779801_1, 78779804_1, 78779807_1, 78779809_1, ITS collection, Bad Arolsen archives, accessed at the USHMM.

[39] Comité International de la Croix Rouge—Genève, "Rapport relative aux camps Israelites dans les environs d'Athènes et intitules: 'Camps de Transit'," February 28, 1946, The World Jewish Congress Geneva Office records, RG-68.045M, Reel 54, USHMM, Washington DC.

again—survivors of the extermination camps.[40] Many women were or became pregnant in the hachsharah, often outside marriage, because they were either officially single or their husbands had been murdered during the Holocaust. Under these circumstances, group marriages were organized in the hachsharot, for which the JDC provided at least a modest dowry, required by Greek law.[41] In a photograph taken in Athens in 1946, the faces of ten hachsharah wedding couples hardly suggest they felt relaxed, free and easy. Lined up, grooms in black suits in the front and brides in wedding gowns standing over them in the second row, with a waving Jewish flag and about a dozen onlookers squeezed in the back, there is just one wedding couple that smiles.[42]

Still, the situation in Patisia was much better than that in Frankoklisia, which was actually only a tent camp, short on blankets, shoes and clothing for its inhabitants. Half of the inmates lacked many accessories to eat in the canteen tent, even plates, cups and spoons were largely missing when the ICRC delegate André Lambert visited the facility. Such general conditions and the deplorable sanitary situation made worse the harm inflicted on former deportees in the concentration camps, ranging from avitaminosis to the effects of pseudo-medical experiments.[43] None of the documents, however, mentions specifically the afflictions of the temporary residents, neither during the war nor afterwards.

In the light of the situation in which the Jews found themselves in Greece, and with the Civil War raging in the country, Eliahu Shachnai, the head of the Jewish Agency mission in Greece, approached the JDC's representatives to adapt their local agreements to the new circumstances. Until then, the Jewish Agency's accounting and monthly reports had been non-transparent, or rather non-existent; so from spring 1946 on, the Agency was obliged to submit all expenses for

[40] "Greece," April 30, 1946, Greece, General, 1946-1948, NY AR 1945-54/4/33/2/385, JDC Archives, New York.

[41] Letter from Herbert Katzki to AJDC New York, Re: Report on Greece, October 23, 1950, Greece, General, 1949-1954, NY AR 1945-54/4/33/2/384, JDC Archives, Washington DC.

[42] Fleming, *Greece*, 174.

[43] Comite International de la Croix Rouge - Geneve, "Rapport relatif aux camps israélites situés dans les environs d'Athènes et intitulés: 'Camps de Transit'." February 28, 1946, The World Jewish Congress Geneva Office records, RG-68.045M, Reel 54, USHMM, Washington DC.

approval not only by the local JDC authorities but also by the JDC European Headquarters in Paris.[44]

This arrangement, however, did not put an end to the disagreement between the Jewish Agency and JDC, which in fact continued until the last hachsharah in Greece was closed down. The pervasive chaos and disorder—a condition that survivors either do not mention or quickly pass over in their testimonies—must have reminded them of the concentration camps at the end of the war. This time it was no longer the brutality but the persistent state of despair that undermined their expectations for a possible restoration of normalcy in their lives.

Hachsharot in Greece in Eyewitness Accounts

Compared to other European cases, the life-writing of Jews from Greece gained its momentum only at the turn of the last century. Although several Holocaust survivors who made aliyah published memoirs, their account of the hachsharah experience is very limited. One of the most prominent among these writers was Moshe Aelion, an Auschwitz survivor that worked in the crematorium as a member of the so-called Sonderkommando. His experience, however, does not relate to hachsharah in Greece but rather in Italy, from where he clandestinely migrated to Palestine. His words nonetheless confirm the main motivation behind many young Jewish men's decision not to return to Greece for good. Although the Holocaust, which destroyed his family and the entire Jewish community he came from, played a significant role in his choice, the news about the Greek Civil War and compulsory military service, including for Jewish camp survivors, that reached him in Italy sealed his decision to migrate.[45] This is confirmed by the testimonies of Jewish men from Greece in interviews collected in Israel by Shmuel Refael in the 1980s.[46]

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[44] The JDC made clear there is "no general agreement." Letter from E. Schahnay [*sic*] to Mr. Goldfine, 6 May 1946, Greece: Athens: Hachsharah Expenses 1947-1950, G 1945-54/4/9/6/GR.25, JDC Archives, Geneva.

[45] Moshe Ha-Elion, *The Straits of Hell: The Chronicle of a Salonikan Jew in the Nazi Extermination Camps Auschwitz, Mauthausen, Melk, Ebensee* (Möhnesee: Bibliopolis, 2005), 73.

[46] Shmuel Refael, *Bi-netiveyshe'ol: yehudey yavan ba-sho'ah-pirqey edut* [The road to hell: Greek Jews in the Shoah. Testimonies] (Tel Aviv: ha-Makhon le-heqer yahadut Saloniki, 1988), see for

Eftychia Osmo is the only Jewish woman from Greece to have given an extensive written account of her post-war migration to Palestine. Her parents and youngest siblings were murdered, yet Eftychia survived Auschwitz and returned to her two sisters who were hiding in their native Corfu during the war. Her Zionist beliefs and the harsh conditions she encountered in Greece upon her return, however, convinced her to make aliyah.[47] At the age of 23, with a good knowledge of Hebrew from school and hachsharah experience gained in Italy before returning to Greece, Eftychia was an ideal candidate for aliyah. After contacting the Jewish Agency office in Athens in the spring of 1946, she was assigned to work in Patisia. She recounts her recruitment experience and subsequent life on the ground as follows:

They wanted me to stay in Greece for another year and deal with the matters of the *hachsharah*. They gave me a list of members and boxes of cigarettes to share. I was also instructed to make the list of girls who worked in the laundry for the [*hachsharah*] members, and other everyday matters. There were many groups who waited for almost a year to emigrate.[48]

Although JDC and former residents themselves describe the hachsharah, in its early stage between 1945 and 1946, as a facility for a temporary stay of two to three months, Israel Gatenio, Eftychia's husband-to-be, was one of those to spend over a year there. For men of compulsory military service age, it was the only effective way to avoid the draft. Even so, Israel and Eftychia were among the lucky ones, as they were spared the deterioration of the hachsharah, without any real prospect of an organized transfer to Palestine. Soon after Eftychia joined the hachsharah, both she and Israel were moved to the provisional transit camp in Sounio, on the west

example the interview with Isodor Alalouf, 35, Yaakov Jabari, 137, and Gedalia Levy, 282. On Refael's documentation project, see Alisa Meyuḥas Ginio, *Between Sepharad and Jerusalem: History, Identity and Memory of the Sephardim* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 324-326.

47 Nata Gatenio, 30258, Visual History Archive (VHA), USC Shoah Foundation, accessed at the Malach Centre for Visual History, Charles University, Prague, with funding from the LM2015071 LINDAT/CLARIN Research Infrastructure. Lampsa and Sibi, *I zoi ap' tin archi*, 319-321.

48 Nata Gattegno-Osmo [*sic*], *Apo tin Kerkyra sto Mpirkenaou ke stin Ierousalim, I istoria mias kerkyreas* [From Corfu to Birkenau and Jerusalem: The story of a Corfu woman] (Athens: Gavriilidis, 2005), 134.

shore of the Aegean Sea, about 60 kilometers south of Athens. Living in tents that in the warm May weather created the impression of being at a Jewish summer camp, they waited for the ship that would secretly take them to Palestine. According to Eftychia, rules were relaxed: Jews moved freely in and out of the camp to visit old family friends during the day and had fun with new Jewish friends from all over Greece while staying in Sounio overnight. Their migration expectations were fulfilled just at the outbreak of the Jewish holiday of Shavuot, on June 2, 1946, when they boarded the *Haviva Reik* with 461 other survivors, mostly from Greece.[49]

Since in Greece hachsharot were meant exclusively for Jewish youth, some parents decided to split the family, a strategy which in many instances had proved useful during the war. Salomon Koen, former resistance fighter whose non-Jewish wife Toula Dolma was killed during the civil unrest in Athens in December 1944, was one of them. While planning aliyah for himself and his infant son, Samis, he placed his motherless baby in the Jewish orphanage in Athens. Samis left Greece as a child passenger on the first and only official voyage to Palestine on August 4, 1945 and Salomon joined the hachsharah to embark on the overcrowded *Haviva Reik* about a year later and meet his son in the land of Israel.[50]

Jewish children's migration to Palestine was imperative not only in parents' view but also in the perception of the first postwar JDC country director, Gaynor Jacobson. He also pointed to adolescent Jewish women as vulnerable subjects. For them, JDC established a shelter in Athens where they learned crafts and were taken care of.[51] Teenagers Sarah and Dora Tivoli, originally from Thessaloniki, who had survived the war in hiding but lost their parents and other close relatives in the Nazi camps, were among those who stayed in the shelter. From there, they went to the hachsharah. Sarah—then only seventeen—describes in her interview the training they received there: Hebrew classes, history and geography of the land of

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[49] Ibid., 136. For the national composition of the passengers on board the *Haviva Reik*, see Lampsa and Sibi, *I zoi ap' tin archi*, Table 6, 367-377.

[50] Shlomo Cohen, 6883, VHA, USC Shoah Foundation. See also the list of members of the Hachsharaoth "Patissia" and "Frankoklissia" on the 15.1.46, Registration of Liberated Former Persecutees at Various Locations 3.1.1.3/0015_78779800_1, ITS collection, Bad Arolsen archives, accessed at the USHMM.

[51] Oral history interview with Gaynor I. Jacobson, tape 8, conducted by Tad Szulc (1988), RG-50.968.0032, USHMM.

Israel, working in the garden, in the kitchen and the laundry, and learning Hebrew songs and dances after work was done. She also describes her fears, that lasted long after the war, how trust and intimacy were all gone, and how the only thing that mattered was survival.[52]

Two months later, in June 1946, Sarah became yet another passenger of the *Haviva Reik*, bound for Palestine. The distressing sense of incarceration, which had hunted her in the hachsharah, only intensified when Sarah and other clandestine migrants on board were put in the Atlit detention camp for refugees in Palestine, encircled by barbed wire. Sarah also recalls that her early integration into the new environment was hampered by the fact that her sister Dora and brother Sam, an Auschwitz survivor, were separated from her and did not arrive in the Middle East until much later.[53]

Jacobson in his interview seems proud of JDC's achievements regarding the shelter for homeless girls in Athens, but what remains unmentioned is the migration of potential Jewish conscripts in the Greek Army to the British Mandate of Palestine. Some of them had been resistance fighters during the war that in its aftermath tried to avoid military service in Greece but were ready to fight for Israel. Jacobson was aware that because of his involvement in clandestine aliyah, his bending of the rules and his lack of impartiality, he "was soon regarded as dangerous by the British Foreign Office."[54]

One of the resistance fighters who refused conscription as a conscientious objector, and whose loyalty to Greece was undoubtedly questioned by postwar authorities, was Zakinos Rousso. During the Greco-Italian war (October 1940 to April 1941), in his early twenties, Zakinos had fought against the Italian aggressors. With the German invasion in April 1941, he was discharged and returned to his native town, Serres, in northern Greece. As part of Bulgarian occupied Thrace, almost all Serres Jews were deported and murdered in the Nazi extermination camp of Treblinka in 1943. Zakinos left just in time to join his brother in Athens but there they were arrested by the Italian authorities. He was imprisoned in the Ario camp in the Peloponnese, first by the Italians and then by the Germans. Zakinos managed to

[52] Sarah Cohen, 16995, VHA, USC Shoah Foundation.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Oral history interview with Gaynor I. Jacobson, tape 8, conducted by Tad Szulc (1988), RG-50.968.0032, USHMM.

escape from the camp and joined the left-wing resistance. He was discharged after the Varkiza Agreement in February 1945 and then, learned about the possibility of migrating to Palestine from a fellow Jewish resistance fighter.[55]

At a Zionist gathering in Athens, where Zakinos met other young Jewish survivors, he finally realized he was not alone in his fate. Ready for action in support of Jewish recovery, he felt that "suddenly, from a Greek patriot, I became a Jewish patriot. The energy I gave for my first homeland I would now give for the second, which could give me a better future so that what happened does not happen again."[56] With this attitude, Zakinos became a perfect candidate for aliyah. Zakinos, with his Jewish companion and on the advice of the Jewish Agency's emissary, sought out the hachsharah in Patisia in summer 1945, at a time when it had just come into existence. A year later, he too boarded the *Haviva Reik*. What he saw in Patisia upon arrival was a farm with small stable-like buildings housing about fifty to sixty people. He was received by a member of the Jewish Agency in British uniform who explained to him in Hebrew where to stay. Soon he got three more roommates, all of them Auschwitz survivors. He recalls that almost every day during the summer of 1945 there were five to six newcomers. Regardless of their former occupation, all were required to learn to farm and somehow adjust to the rules of the hachsharah.

Zakinos also brings to light that none of the residents really wanted to work, but that was not the only problem that Patisia's managers faced. Although food and cigarette rations were provided as part of the relief packages, Zakinos describes how goods were smuggled into the hachsharah.[57] Even alcohol was available and some of the Nazi camps survivors, such as Isaak Dente, tried to alleviate their suffering by drinking.[58] Once supplies inaccessible in war-torn Greece started being stolen from JDC's warehouses and entered the black market in Athens, something not unnoticed by the Greek police, Jacobson became scared that the JDC in general and the hachsharah project in particular would run into trouble. The warehouses, however, seemed to be well-guarded by young Jewish trainees

[55] Zakinos (Itzhak) Rousso, 45, Jewish Museum of Greece (EME).

[56] Quotation from the interview with Itschak Rousso in Lampsa and Sibi, *I zoi ap' tin archi*, 347.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Isaak Dente, 3611, VHA, USC Shoah Foundation. Some interviews with former hachsharot residents, including Isaak Dente, can be also found in the Fortunoff Video Archive. Their description of the hachsharot is, however, brief and therefore not really relevant for this research.

from the hachsharot and protected by a wall with barbed wire and steel fences in the windows. Jacobson recounts the mysterious thefts as follows:

We did everything we could to figure it out. People were checked in terms of their clothing that they did not walk out with two or three pairs of pens. [...] By accident, we learned that one or two of these young Zionists had friends on the outside. They were not as devoted Zionists as we thought, and they went to the toilet [...] and they were able to maneuver [goods out of the window] using some kind of a slingshot [...]. That was the most disappointing thing to me that [it was done by] the young people who were taken to the *hachsharot*.[59]

The attitude of Holocaust survivors apparently shocked Jacobson. He immediately discharged the Jews involved in stealing from the warehouse from their duty but neither reported them to the police nor expelled them from vocational training. The story was only revealed in the interview recorded with Jacobson more than forty years later.[60]
Obviously, the time spent in the hachsharot helped Jewish inhabitants gain a new sense of community and belonging, even devotion to Zionist ideas, but their camp mentality to live and stay alive, to seize the moment, prevailed. In a way that relief workers could not understand, their transgressions of the rules, which Holocaust survivors confessed to in their personal testimonies and which were to fade away only gradually, probably strengthened a sense of individual agency they had been deprived of during the persecution and helped them start their life anew.

The Obstructive and Destructive Phase of *Hachsharot* in Greece

Throughout 1946, over a thousand Jews from Greece left the country in an organized but clandestine way overseen by the Jewish Agency for Palestine, with the substantial support of JDC authorities. Their voyages, however, were far more complicated than those in 1945. In June 1946 the *Haviva Reik* was seized by British

[59] Oral history interview with Gaynor I. Jacobson, tape 8, conducted by Tad Szulc (1988), RG-50.968.0032, USHMM.
[60] Ibid.

authorities at the coast of Mandatory Palestine and its 463 Jewish passengers were detained in the Atlit camp south of Haifa as illegal immigrants. In July 1946 Jewish migrants on the *Henrietta Szold* could not even get off the ship. Instead, British authorities transferred them to British refugee camps in Cyprus. Located in the southeast Mediterranean, between Greece and Palestine, these camps were under the supervision of JDC country director Morris Laub and hosted over 52,000 refugees until they were closed in February 1949, after the Israeli War of Independence was over and Britain de facto recognized Israel.[61]

Although personal testimonies on the hachsharot in Greece are absent for the period after 1946, documents from the JDC reveal the state of affairs quite poignantly. During the summer of 1947 the question of the responsibility for the Patisia hachsharah in Athens was raised repeatedly by the then-JDC country director for Greece, Harold Goldfarb. By that time, the Tsakonas estate in Patisia was the only remaining hachsharah in Greece and was in a "pretty demoralized state."[62] Disagreements over its management were pervasive and profound. In August, Goldfarb received an answer to his letter from Herbert Katzki at the JDC European Headquarters in Paris, stating that there are "no general agreements between the JDC and the Jewish Agency," but the JDC's willingness to support vocational training still applied.[63] Katzki also suggested that the JDC should only inspect the hachsharah and not employ its own staff there. The overtones of the ongoing correspondence suggest that Goldfarb's local experience told him that such an approach could not work effectively.[64]

In March 1948, Goldfarb clearly expressed his bitterness about what was going on in Greece regarding the hachsharah in a five-page-long reaction to a letter from the JDC Headquarters in New York. In that letter, Henrietta K. Buchman stated that there were still over a hundred people living in the hachsharah, and to an outsider,

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[61] Hadjisavvas, "'From Dachau to Cyprus'," 146-164; for more on Cyprus detention camps see especially Dalia Ofer, "From Illegal Immigrants to New Immigrants: The Cyprus Detainees," in *Holocaust and History, The Known, The Unknown, The Disputed and The Re-examined*, eds. Michael Berenbaum and Abraham Peck (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998), 733-749; and Kochavi, *Post-Holocaust Politics*, 66-78.

[62] Letter from AJDC Athens to AJDC Paris, Re: Hachsharah, July 30, 1947, Greece: Athens: Hachsharah Expenses 1947-1950, G 1945-54/4/9/6/GR.25, JDC Archives, Geneva.

[63] Letter from Herbert Katzki to AJDC Athens, Re: Hachsharah, August 8, 1947, Greece: Athens: Hachsharah Expenses 1947-1950, G 1945-54/4/9/6/GR.25, JDC Archives, Geneva.

[64] Ibid.

living conditions looked "utterly destitute," with "very little food and virtually no clothing."[65] In justifying JDC's work in Greece, Goldfarb minced no words:

The clue to the situation about which you enquire in your letter of March 19th is the fact that the Hachsharah is really not a Hachsharah. It comprises a group of heterogeneous people who were led by the expectation of immediate emigration to Palestine, created by the local representatives of the Jewish Agency, to assemble in a kind of "staging area," basically inadequate for housing the 100 to 110 people concerned. Lacking cooperative spirit, unused to discipline, unable to work together for their own best interests, such as even keeping their own quarters clean and presentable, and unable to utilize existing facilities to their maximum benefit, these people present a far more woeful aspect to a casual visitor than a careful examination of the situation would reveal.[66]

Goldfarb made the Jewish Agency fully responsible for this distressful situation. He listed separately all clothing for men (70), women (35) and children (8), bedding, flatware as well as food and toiletries the JDC delivered to the hachsharah within the past year. Additionally, JDC was covering hospitalizations, special diets, and the medical treatments needed by residents, with doctors coming for medical inspection directly to the hachsharah. By far the most serious problem, according to him, was the attitude of the people in the hachsharah. Nonetheless, as Goldfarb also revealed, imports of goods were lately obstructed by malfunctioning customs regulations in Greece.[67]

Given the ongoing civil war in Greece, most Jewish men consistently saw the hachsharah as the only option to escape military conscription. Unlike in Germany, Austria, and Italy, Jews in Greece were not DPs but mostly Greek citizens. And since men between the ages of 18 and 40 had to have a military registration to work in Greece, they had little chance of finding work outside the facility. Nevertheless,

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[65] Letter from Melvin S. Goldstein to Blanche Bernstein, Re: Hachsharah in Greece, March 17, 1948; quote from the Letter from AJJDC (sic!) New York to Mr. Harold Goldfarb, March 19, 1948, Greece: Athens: Hachsharah Expenses 1947-1950, G 1945-54/4/9/6/GR.25, JDC Archives, Geneva.

[66] Letter from AJDC Athens to Mrs. Henrietta K. Buchman, Re: Hachsharah, Athens, Greece, March 24, 1948, Greece: Athens: Hachsharah Expenses 1947-1950, G 1945-54/4/9/6/GR.25, JDC Archives, Geneva.

[67] Ibid.

most of those eligible for military service, who were de facto hiding in the hachsharah and avoiding compulsory conscription, were unwilling to contribute to its sustainability either by working on the farm or otherwise.[68] Goldfarb described them repeatedly as lacking a "sense of collective responsibility," adding that this can hardly be stimulated if their only "desire to migrate to Palestine" is postponed indefinitely.[69] Those men were virtually broken because of their unfulfilled expectations.

A year later, in summer 1949, when the dissolution of the hachsharot was imminent throughout Europe, the situation in Patisia had not change much, even though the Greek Civil War was reaching its peak and coming to an end. At that point, the hachsharah situation became well known in certain circles because of the uproar caused by a letter by Asher Moissis, which he distributed widely in his official position as an Israeli consular official in Athens. The letter, primarily addressed to the Foreign Affairs Ministry in Israel, was forwarded by Moissis to, among others, the JDC offices in New York, Paris and Athens, as well as to the Jewish Agency Headquarters in Jerusalem.[70] The fact that Moissis did not consult with JDC representatives in Athens before sending it, that he presented himself as the problem-solver, and that Goldfarb only learned about it from his superiors, outraged the JDC.[71] Although the legal status of the hachsharah in Athens became moot after the Jewish Agency withdrew its involvement in late January 1949 and the lease was terminated a month later, increasing numbers of Jews

[68] Letter from AJDC Athens to Mrs. Henrietta K. Buchman, Re: Hachsharah, Athens, Greece, March 24, 1948; Letter from Melvin S. Goldstein to Mrs. Henrietta K. Buchman, Re: Hachsharah in Greece, March 26, 1948; Letter from Melvin S. Goldstein to AJDC Jerusalem, Re: Hachsharah in Greece Activities in Tripolitania, March 30, 1948, Greece: Athens: Hachsharah Expenses 1947-1950, G 1945-54/4/9/6/GR.25, JDC Archives, Geneva.

[69] Letter from AJDC Athens to Mrs. Henrietta K. Buchman, Re: Hachsharah, Athens, Greece, March 24, 1948, Greece: Athens: Hachsharah Expenses 1947-1950, G 1945-54/4/9/6/GR.25, JDC Archives, Geneva.

[70] Letter from Asher Moissis to Ministry of Foreign Affairs Hakirya, June 7, 1949, Greece, General, 1949-1954, NY AR 1945-54/4/33/2/384, JDC Archives, New York.

[71] Letter from A. J. D. C. Athens to Mr. Robert Pilpel, Re: Hachsharah—Greece, June 22, 1949; Letter from A. J. D. C. Athens to Mr. Melvin Goldstein, Re: Hachsharah situation and the Moissis Report, June 27, 1949, Greece: Tsacona Hachsharot 1949, G 1945-54/4/9/6/GR.41, JDC Archives, Geneva.

started to arrive from the Greek provinces, escaping from the escalating civil war. The situation at the facility deteriorated rapidly and required a decisive solution.[72] Given the changing circumstances, the JDC office in Athens quickly prepared a rescue plan, in which the hachsharah was officially transformed into the *Athens Shelter for destitute Jews*, with a final closing date set to September 30, 1949. The key negotiator of the transformation was Harold Goldfarb and the implementor was Bell Mazur, a scholar of ancient Greece and a former UNRRA representative, now working for the JDC. Goldfarb succeeded in extending the renting contract and engaged both the Relief Committee of the Jewish Community in Athens and, after much hesitation, the Relief Committee of the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece in this uneasy endeavor. Although the Central Relief Committee officially supported the Zionist cause, it was most concerned about the lack of material and financial support, to the detriment of the Jews who remained in Greece and to the benefit of those who left.[73]

The JDC continued its policy of not accepting additional administrative responsibilities but was unwilling to "abandon the hachsharah to its fate."[74] The Tsakonas estate was again refurbished, and the food, as well as other expenses, were again covered by the JDC. Only the soup kitchen closed in favor of individual food vouchers. The JDC Headquarters in Paris expressed satisfaction with the report delivered by Goldfarb and encouraged him to make clear to Asher Moissis how dissatisfied they were with the letter he had written, which they found "most unjustified and unwarranted."[75] They seemed to be aware of, and sympathetic to, his efforts to show himself in a good light and to strengthen his position both in the Jewish community and in the Greek political reality as well as vis-à-vis Israeli authorities. At the same time, however, they made clear that they saw Moissis, a lawyer with good language skills familiar with the local situation and helpful in the matter of Jewish property restitution, as useful for other goals they were pursuing in Greece, and therefore advised Goldfarb not to reduce his salary.

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[72] Letter from A. J. D. C. Athens to Mr. Robert Pilpel, Re: Hachsharah—Greece, June 22, 1949, Greece: Tsacona Hachsharot 1949, G 1945-54/4/9/6/GR.41, JDC Archives, Geneva.

[73] Ibid.

[74] Ibid.

[75] Letter from Hachaharah—Greece to Mr. Harold Goldfarb, July 1, 1949, Greece: Tsacona Hachsharot 1949, G 1945-54/4/9/6/GR.41, JDC Archives, Geneva.

As agreed, the hachsharah in Patissia was dissolved in autumn 1949, shortly after the last battle of the Greek Civil War had been won by the ruling elites in Athens and the communist opponents defeated. The threat of Holocaust survivors having to enlist and fight in a war had passed, and so the remaining inhabitants of Patisia could begin to decide their future regardless of this looming risk. The position of the JDC office in Greece and the involvement of the prominent Jewish leader Asher Moissis in this matter remain unclear. His role in the post-war reconstruction of Jews in Greece has a firm place in his family's legacy but is largely neglected in historical scholarship.[76]

Conclusion

The existence of the hachsharot, and especially their coming to an end in autumn 1949, coincided with the end of the Greek Civil War. Over a period of four years, Holocaust survivors made the decision to leave their country of origin, to which many had just returned after a long journey from the Nazi camps, based not only on the realization that almost no Jews survived, or on their adherence to Zionism, but much more so on the political circumstances in Greece, where the risk of participating in another war was high and personal reconstruction almost impossible. Still, their stay in a hachsharah and the adaptation to a new life in the land of Israel, unavoidably gave their personal narrations a Zionist imprint.
The fear Jews in Greece shared was aptly brought closer by historian Katherine E. Fleming when she said that for Jews since the beginning of the Greek nation-state

[76] Moissis, *Greek-Jewish Patrimony*, edited by his son Raphael Moissis. The only recent research focusing on Asher Moissis is Leon Saltiel, "Two Friends in Axis-Occupied Greece: The Rescue Efforts of Yomtov Yacoel and Asher Moisis," *Journal of Genocide Research* 21, no. 3 (2019): 342-358, but it deals only with his actions during the war. Fleming's pioneering work of does not mention his name except for one footnote: Fleming, *Greece*, 258, n 115. In the recent volume on Jews and the (post)Holocaust in Greece, only two chapters mention his name explicitly but without much context. Maria Kavala, "The Scale of Jewish Property Theft in Nazi-occupied Thessaloniki," 200, and Kostis Kornetis, "Expropriating the Space of the Other: Property Spoliations of Thessalonican Jews in the 1940s," 245, in *The Holocaust in Greece*, ed. Antoniou and Dirk Moses. While Carabott and Vassilikou in their sub-chapter on Greek Zionists briefly introduce another Zionist leader in Greece, Robert Raphael, Moissis is absent in their work: Carabott and Vassilikou, " 'New Men vs Old Jews'," 266.

"the long century of Greek expansion had concluded not with the chance for consolidation and normalization but with its opposite."[77] The Greek Civil War as a reason for aliyah—after all the brutalities to which the Jews of Greece had been subjected to in previous decades—appears repeatedly in the personal testimonies of the Holocaust survivors who went through the hachsharot. Although Jewish residents from Greece usually address their hachsharah experience and routine only vaguely, internal JDC and ICRC documents make clear that the living conditions in these vocational training centers significantly deviated from those of normal life. While some survivors felt more like prisoners in the closed facility, which made them feel depressed, apathetic and numb, others tried to leave the hachsharah at every possible opportunity, avoiding training and staying inside only overnight. Transgressions against the rules, particularly in the area of work morale, were of concern to the authorities in charge, especially the JDC office in Greece, which was concerned about possible damage to its local image. However, no JDC source reported any residents misbehaving towards each other, nor on sexual issues, which would be expected, given the high number of pregnancies.

Blatant discretion on political issues in Greece is apparent not only in the press releases on the hachsharot but also in JDC sources, where even the notion of a Greek Civil War, and the violent ideological clashes connected to it, is as good as absent. For the JDC office, this certainly has to do with the apolitical positioning of the whole organization. The Jewish Community sought to avoid enmity with both international aid-donors and Greek government officials.

More generally, the discourse about the hachsharot and the concealment of their problems reflects, on the one hand, the evolving political order in Europe, divided by the emerging Cold War and in which Greece found itself in the West, and, on the other hand, the radical upheaval of Britain's imperial position after the United States became the Western superpower. Under the circumstances, and because of Britain's inability to stabilize the situation in war-torn Greece, the United States proclaimed the Truman Doctrine in 1947 and effectively took over from Britain.[78]

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[77] Fleming, *Greece*, 188.

[78] Howard Jones, *A New Kind of War: America's Global Strategy and the Truman Doctrine in Greece* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Mogens Pelt, *Tying Greece to the West: US-West German-Greek relations 1949-1974* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2006); Konstantina E. Botsiou, "New Policies, Old Politics: American Concepts of Reform in Marshall Plan Greece," *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 27, no. 2 (2009): 209-240.

This placed London in a subordinate position to Washington not only in Greece but also regarding the changing constellation in the Middle East, whereby it became more difficult to obstruct Jewish migration.

In the climate of the civil war, Greek authorities, who historically and politically did not see Jews as very loyal citizens, and even less so if they had joined the left-wing resistance during the war,[79] did not really stand in the way of their migration. The 1998 collection of the Greek Foreign Ministry's documents even gives the impression that they received news of it with some relief. With some exceptions, such as Asher Moissis, the postwar Jewish Community in Greece seemed more consumed by the competition to allocate benefits to those who were to remain, rather than being overly concerned with their fellow Jews in the hachsharot and their departure from the country, discursively supporting the Zionist cause without really addressing it.

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Keywords: Migration, Relief, Holocaust, Greece, Hachsharah

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[79] Kateřina Králová, "'Being Traitors': Post-War Greece in the Experience of Jewish Partisans," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 17, no. 2 (2017): 263-280.

How to quote this article:
Kateřina Králová, "*Hachsharot* in Greece, 1945-1949: Camps or Vocational Centers?" in "Training for *Aliyah*: Young Jews in *Hachsharot* across Europe between the 1930s and late 1940s," eds. Verena Buser and Chiara Renzo, *Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History. Journal of the Fondazione CDEC* 21, no. 1 (2022), DOI: 0.48248/issn.2037-741X/13315

Theater in Jewish DPs Camps in Italy: A Stage for Political and Ideological Debate on *Aliyah*, Zionism and Jewish identity

by *Achinoam Aldouby*, *Michal Peles-Almagor*, and *Chiara Renzo*

Abstract

This article focuses on theater as a form of cultural, political and ideological training for aliyah *aimed at Jewish displaced persons (DPs) in postwar Italy. Exploring the private archives of the Zionist emissary Zvi Aldouby, we intend to move beyond the traditional idea of* hachsharah *as a preparation for* aliyah *based primarily on physical and agricultural training. This analysis relates on a set of diverse sources, ranging from institutional reports, official and informal correspondence, personal notes, sketches, photographs and drawings. Adopting an interdisciplinary perspective, the article is divided in two parts. The first one frames Aldouby's mission in relation to the rehabilitative programs and the political landscape within the refugee camps. The second part explores the birth of a dramatic circle founded by Aldouby and analyzes two theatrical plays directed by him,* The Golem (Ha-Golem) *by H. Leivick and* This Land (Ha-Adamah Ha-Zot) *by A. Ashman. Through the analysis of Aldouby mission, the article emphasizes the role of culture among Jewish DPs as well as the political motivations behind it. In this scenario, characterized by the Jewish DPs' efforts to start a new life and the Zionist emissaries' endeavor to organize their* aliyah, *theater became the stage to promote and discuss new understandings of home and identity.*

Introduction

Part I

Wandering towards Palestine

The role of culture: Zvi Aldouby in the Santa Maria al Bagno DP Camp

Aldouby's Theater: A Springboard Toward a New Identity

Part II

The Tkumah Dramatic Circle

The Golem and the Question of Jewish Redemption

"A Taste of Israel": *This Land* and the Journey Toward Independence

Conclusion

Introduction*

After the massive repatriation procedure implemented by the Allies between the summer of 1945 and the beginning of 1946, there were still one million displaced people in refugee camps in Germany, Austria and Italy. Among them there were around 100,000 Jews of different nationalities. This was the estimate published in April 1946 by the Anglo-American Commission of Inquiry, in charge of "examin[ing] political, economic and social conditions in Palestine as they bear upon the problem of Jewish immigration [from Europe] and settlement therein [...]."[1] At that time Italy hosted only 20% of the remaining 100,000 Jewish DPs,

* The authors of the article thank the Aldouby family for sharing Zvi Aldouby's private archives. We are also grateful to Roni Cohen and David Fishof for their invaluable assistance in translating the Yiddish sources from Aldouby's archives. All the Hebrew sources in this article were translated by the authors. Unless otherwise specified, all the images included in the article are from Zvi Aldouby' private collection, published by courtesy of the Aldouby family. The entire article was produced collaboratively by the three authors. The introduction and conclusion were written jointly, while specific sections were composed individually: Chiara Renzo wrote Part I (pp. 108-127); Achinoam Aldouby and Michal Peles-Almagor co-authored Part II (pp. 127-150).

[1] Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry, ed., *Report of the Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry Regarding the Problems of European Jewry and Palestine, Lausanne, April 20, 1946* (London: H.M.S.O, 1946).

but this relatively small group of refugees nonetheless triggered transnational processes with unpredictable outcomes.[2]

The Jewish DPs who had arrived in Italy were strongly motivated to leave Europe as soon as possible. While many countries were reluctant to open their doors to refugees, they were attracted by the possibility of illegal migration to Palestine. In this scenario, Italy became a key site of transit and the headquarters of the Mossad Le-Aliyah Bet, the underground branch of the Jewish Agency in charge of organizing the departures of clandestine ships from Europe to Palestine. In fact, from 1939 the British Mandate had established strict limitations on Jewish migration to Palestine, forcing Jewish DPs to remain in the refugee camps.[3] The Jewish DPs' long wait in Italy, however, turned into a time of training for *aliyah,* with the aim of acquainting them with Zionist pioneering ideology.

Hachsharot (from the Hebrew word which means "preparation, training") were the paradigmatic tool through which Zionist organizations prepared the candidates for aliyah. The hachsharot, however, were also paradigmatic of the factionalism prevailing among the political parties in the DP camps. The controversies arising from the implementation of these Zionist-oriented programs originated mainly from the emissaries of the political movements (in Hebrew, *shlichim*) sent by the *Yishuv* (the Jewish settlement in Palestine) to the refugee camps from late 1945. Supervised by the Merkaz He-Halutz (The Pioneer Center)—the umbrella organization that coordinated the activities of the youth movements—the emissaries ran the hachsharot according to their affiliation and competed with each other to attract more Jewish DPs to their parties. For this purpose, they designed specific programs to rehabilitate and train Jewish DPs for aliyah, which included not only agricultural or vocational training but also a series of wide-ranging cultural activities.

[2] For a comprehensive bibliography on DPs in postwar Europe we refer to the website of the Arolsen Archives. Accessed March 23, 2022, https://arolsen-archives.org/en/news/dp-bibliographie-online/.

[3] Dalia Ofer, *Escaping the Holocaust: Illegal Immigration to the Land of Israel, 1939-1944* (New York - Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); Idit Zertal, *From Catastrophe to Power: The Holocaust Survivors and the Emergence of Israel* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1998).

Fig. 1. Zvi Aldouby (standing on the left) with a group of students and teachers of the school in Santa Maria al Bagno DP camp, 1946, Photo 16/2, Aldouby' Private Collection, Jerusalem.

In the context of the Zionist movement, the hachsharot implemented the idea of preparing Jewish candidates for aliyah, primarily through agricultural training. In this article we seek to move beyond the traditional notion of a physical *hachasharah*, offering a new perspective that centers on culture and education in DP camps. Drawing on unpublished primary sources from the private archives of the emissary Zvi Yehuda Aldouby (1904-1996), we argue that cultural programs in the refugee camps, in particular theater, created a stage for political and ideological debate surrounding Zionism, Jewish identity and aliyah.

Aldouby grew up in Galicia, in a Chasidic Zionist family. When he was ten years old, his father was murdered in front of his whole family while protecting a Jewish girl who was trying to escape from a Russian soldier who was harassing her.[4] Following this traumatic event, the family decided to immigrate to Palestine.[5] In

[4] At that time, his family changed their last name to Aldouby, an acronym of their late father's name: Asher Lemel Dov Ben Yakov.

[5] During his mission among Jewish DPs in Italy, Aldouby wrote a poem called "My Rupinkah," recalling his longing for his childhood hometown in Galicia. *My Rupinkah*, undated, file 103, Zvi Aldouby Private Archives (hereafter ZAPA), Jerusalem, Israel, [Hebrew].

Jerusalem, Aldouby graduated in Liberal Arts at the Hebrew University and obtained the diploma of education from the Hebrew Teachers' Seminary. He worked as a teacher in the Tel Amal school in Tel Aviv until the summer of 1946, when he started his mission as an emissary of the leading labour party Mapai in Italy. In the refugee camps, he was in charge of culture and education until February 1948. His personal journals, notes, letters, photographs, and other forms of correspondence offer a new and unique understanding of the cultural life of Jewish DPs as well as the political motivation at the heart of these cultural activities.

Considering the Jewish DPs' preparation for aliyah as both a political and cultural laboratory, this article aims to understand the role of theater as a social event bringing together educational and ideological mechanisms. To tackle the challenge of grasping the experiential dimension of the Jewish DPs' theater performances—ephemeral by nature—we adopt an interdisciplinary approach, which allows us to analyze a set of diverse sources, ranging from institutional reports, official and informal correspondence, personal notes, sketches, photographs and drawings.[6] This vast documentation, albeit fragmented, helped us reconstruct the historical context in which these theatrical performances were produced, and to understand the multifaceted meaning of the live events.

The first part of the article frames the activities of Merkaz He-Halutz's emissaries against the backdrop of the rehabilitation programs and the underground operations of the Aliyah Bet in Italy. It focuses on Zvi Aldouby's mission in the Santa Maria al Bagno DP camp (in the region of Apulia, southern Italy),[7] where he was in charge of "cultural affairs." At his arrival in the refugee camp, he found a considerable number of children and teenagers, part of whom had already joined Zionist-oriented educational programs. Moreover, distributed across several hachsharot there were both groups waiting to leave for Palestine as well as families who wanted to emigrate to North America, Argentina, Brazil, and Australia. Faced with this heterogeneous community of DPs, Aldouby extended the idea of

[6] For a recent seminal study which emphasizes the analysis of ephemeral sources to understand Modernist Hebrew theater see: Ruthie Abeliovich, *Possessed Voices: Aural Remains from Modernist Hebrew Theater* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2019).

[7] In almost all the primary sources Santa Maria al Bagno is referred to as "Di Bagni" or "Santa Croce", which was a neighborhood of the Santa Maria al Bagno village.

"training for aliyah" to embrace theater as a channel to introduce Zionist values, with the potential to reach a wider audience and to overcome the divisions within the camp. The rejection of the diaspora, the sacrifices of the pioneers, the sense of belonging to *Eretz Israel* are elaborated by Aldouby in a rich production of scripts which ranged from schools' exhibitions to theatrical performances.

This is particularly evident in the second part of the article, which uncovers the birth of the dramatic circle "Tkumah" (in Hebrew, Revival), founded by Aldouby, and offers an in-depth analysis of two theatrical plays directed by him, *The Golem* (*Ha-Golem*) by H. Leivick and *This Land* (*Ha-Adamah Ha-Zot*) by A. Ashman. Both plays were landmarks in the emergence of Zionist theater and Hebrew drama, and had been performed by the Habima Theater Company, in 1925 and 1940, respectively. Questioning the future of Jews' lives in the diaspora, Aldouby's educational approach to aliyah training started an ideological debate through theater, which offered an evocative representation of Eretz Israel as a place that was both promising and challenging.

Aldouby's archives reveal that the work of Yishuv's emissaries was not limited to traditional agricultural training. This article indeed argues that Zvi Aldouby's theatrical productions aimed to provide Jewish DPs with new understandings of home and identity after the Holocaust.

Part I

Wandering towards Palestine

In February 1946, the Organization of Jewish Refugees in Italy (OJRI)—the Jewish DPs' official representative body established in November 1945—published a short pamphlet entitled "We, Jewish Refugees in Italy." [8] It summarized the results of a questionnaire previously distributed among the Jews in the refugee camps in Italy. It asked to provide details on their life during the war as well as their wishes for the future. The pamphlet depicted the Jewish DPs in

[8] The Organization of Jewish Refugees in Italy, ed., *We Jewish Refugees in Italy... The Results of an Inquiry* (Rome: n. p., 1946).

Italy as young (57% of them were between seventeen and twenty-five years old and another 37% were between twenty-six and fifty years old), mostly of Polish origin (72%) and without relatives (75%). They were strongly determined not to return to their former countries, and for this reason they were all "wandering toward Palestine."

This escape movement "from unsatisfactory or even dangerous conditions to what was hoped would be a better future" is better known with the Hebrew term *Brichah* (literally, "flight").[9] The Brichah started in the area liberated by the Red Army in late 1944 by ghetto fighters and Jewish partisans who had started to seek possible routes to reach Palestine. At the end of the war, this originally spontaneous movement turned into an organized one when Brichah leaders emigrated to Palestine and their places were taken by Jewish soldiers and emissaries from the Yishuv, who connected the Brichah with the clandestine departures organized by the Mossad Le-Aliyah Bet.[10]

In this context, the meeting between European Jews and the Jewish soldiers who served in the Allied Army was a crucial moment. Those soldiers were mainly young men in their twenties, graduates of Zionist youth movements and members of *kibbutzim*, who enlisted as volunteers to join the British Army in North Africa in 1942, and in 1944 were gathered into the Jewish Brigade.[11]

From their arrival in southern Italy in 1943 and until the Allied Headquarters allowed international humanitarian organizations to start their mission in Italy in 1945, Jewish soldiers made several efforts to provide Jewish DPs with better living

[9] Yehuda Bauer, *Flight and Rescue: Brichah* (New York: Random House, 1970), viii.

[10] On the activities of the Mossad Le-Aliyah Bet in Italy, see: Mario Toscano, *La 'Porta di Sion': l'Italia e l'immigrazione clandestina ebraica in Palestina, 1945-1948* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1990); Ada Sereni, *I clandestini del mare. L'emigrazione ebraica in terra d'Israele dal 1945 al 1948* (Milano: Mursia, 1973).

[11] Yoav Gelber, "The Meeting Between the Jewish Soldiers from Palestine Serving in the British Army and the She'erit Hapletah," in *Sherith Hapletah, 1944-1948: Rehabilitation and Political Struggle, Proceedings of the Sixth Yad Vashem International Historical Conference*, eds. Israel Gutman and Avital Saf (Jerusalem, October 1985), (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1990), 60-79; Morris Beckman, *The Jewish Brigade: An Army with Two Masters 1944-1945* (Staplehurst: Spellmount, 1998). For an overview on the Jewish Brigade in Italy see also the recent study by Gianluca Fantoni, *Storia della Brigata ebraica. Gli ebrei della Palestina che combatterono in Italia nella Seconda guerra mondiale* (Torino: Einaudi, 2022).

conditions. In parallel, they also offered moral support and encouraged them to refuse repatriation, claiming for their right to make aliyah.[12]

In October 1945, during a visit to the DP camp in Santa Maria al Bagno, Rabbi Jacob Kraft, who served as chaplain in the Allied Army between 1943 and 1946, was impressed by the outcomes of Jewish soldiers' activism among Jewish DPs. In particular, he reported about his meeting with the children living in the youth village established and managed by the Jewish soldiers:

> I had wondered what gave this zestful enthusiasm to these children. Their spirits were high, they seemed so keenly alive, so intensely eager, despite the poverty of their surroundings and the paucity of their possessions. I discovered the reason that morning. Palestinian youth had accomplished one of the amazing miracles of spiritual reclamation and rehabilitation. [...] In some of the classrooms there is only one text for the entire class. I have seen the upright backs of beds used as blackboards. Yet, the work is being done. [...] The educational policy (prominently displayed on every bulletin board) was to instill in the children a love for Zion, and acquaintance with our [Jewish] culture and a desire to rebuild the land. [...] On the walls of the bedrooms and the few classrooms of each *kvutzah* [group] the children have hung their "pin ups"; these are pictures of Herzl, Bialik, Ussishkin, Czernichovsky, Trumpeldor, Jabotinski.[13]

[12] Alex Grobman, *Rekindling the Flame: American Jewish Chaplains and the Survivors of European Jewry, 1944-1948* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994); Dina Porat, "One Side of the Jewish Triangle in Italy: The Encounter of Italian Jews with Holocaust Survivors and Hebrew Soldiers and Zionist Representatives in Italy, 1944-1946," in *Italia Judaica. Gli ebrei nell'Italia unita 1870-1945. Atti del convegno internazionale (Siena, 12-16 giugno 1989)* (Roma: Ministero Beni Culturali e Ambientali, 1993), 487-513.

[13] Jacob Kraft, "From Santa Maria – Whither? October 1945," IT-IT-1296, Activities of the American military chaplains in the refugee camps of southern Italy: Santa Maria di Bagni, Ferramonti, Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People, Jerusalem.

Fig. 2. Students and teachers of the school in Santa Maria al Bagno DP camp at the Hanukkah celebrations in December 1946, Photo 19/1, Aldouby's Private Collection, Jerusalem.

The youth village in the Santa Maria al Bagno DP camp was part of the hachsharah system launched by Jewish soldiers soon after the liberation of the Ferramonti internment camp, in southern Italy.[14] Since early 1944 Jewish soldiers had started to organize small groups of children and teenagers, either unaccompanied or separated from their families, to establish the first hachsharot in the surroundings of the DP camps set up by the Allies in Apulia.[15]

[14] In September 1943, the Allies liberated around 2,000 (mostly foreign) Jews from the Fascist internment camp in Ferramonti di Tarsia (Cosenza, Calabria), see Carlo Spartaco Capogreco, *Ferramonti. La vita e gli uomini del più grande campo d'internamento fascista (1940-1945)* (Florence: Giuntina, 1987). The Red Cross estimated that in 1943 there were 6,386 foreign Jews interned by the Fascist government in Italy, both in forced residency (*internamento libero*) and in concentration camps. For more about the Fascist internment system during World War II see Carlo Spartaco Capogreco, *Mussolini's Camps: Civilian Internment in Fascist Italy (1940-1943)* (London: Routledge, 2019); For more about the foreign Jews and the Italian racial laws see Klaus Voigt, *Il rifugio precario. Gli esuli in Italia dal 1933 al 1945*, vol. 1 (Scandicci: La Nuova Italia, 1993), 291-374; for an analysis of Jews' situation in Italy during Fascism see Michele Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy: From Equality to Persecution*, trans. John Tedeschi and Anne C. Tedeschi (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006).

[15] On the establishment of the first hachsharot for children in 1944 and their development see Chiara Renzo, " 'To Build and Be Built': Jewish Displaced Children in Post-War Italy, 1943-1948," in *Child Migration and Biopolitics. Old and New Experiences in Europe*, eds. Beatrice Scutaru and Simone Paoli (London: Routledge, 2020).

Within a short time, however, the collective lifestyle of the hachsharot appealed to an increasing number of Jewish DPs who had arrived in Italy after the end of the war. At this early stage Jewish soldiers run their training programs among Jewish DPs in a general Zionist framework, avoiding partisanship in order not to compromise unity:

> Within the committee of the [Jewish] Brigade and the Center for the Diaspora[16] – where the vast majority are representatives of Po'alei Agudat Israel, Achdut Ha-'Avodah, and Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir – it was unanimously decided to collaborate in the refugee camps in Italy and Germany and to not establish separate frameworks by origin and political affiliation.[17]

As we shall see, it was the possibility of living in a supportive environment that granted care and offered a daily schedule, more than the political ideology behind it, that attracted a growing number of Jewish DPs to Italy. However, at the end of the war in 1945, the increasing number of Jewish DPs and the arrival of new actors engaged in assisting them brought relevant administrative and socio-political changes to the refugee camps. This led to the institutionalization and quick expansion of the hachsharot and the rehabilitation programs introduced by Jewish soldiers.

The first change relates to the number of the humanitarian organizations that were gradually authorized to enter Italy at the end of military operations, and their impact. In 1945, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), the chief intergovernmental agency in charge of the administration of DP camps, started its mission in Italy. By virtue of a system of mandates, UNRRA was able to share the challenging task of taking care and rehabilitating the people displaced by war with dozens of other organizations, working under its

[16] The Center for the Diaspora (in Hebrew, Merkaz La-Golah) was established by Jewish soldiers in Italy in October 1944, following the establishment of the Jewish Brigade. It was previously known as the Refugee Center (in Hebrew, Merkaz Ha-Plitim) and was founded in 1943 by the Jewish Palestinian Units who arrived in southern Italy along with the Allied Army.

[17] The original document is reported in Yakov Markovitzky*, Buds of Resurrection: The Center for the Diaspora and Local Activities in Italy 1944-1948* (Tel Aviv: Merkaz La-Golah, 1997), 62, [Hebrew].

supervision.[18] As pointed out by the extensive historiography dealing with the relief of Jews in post-war Europe, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) was the leading Jewish humanitarian organization which cooperated with UNRRA to ameliorate the living condition of Jewish DPs in the refugee camps. Especially in Italy, the JDC gained a great degree of autonomy from UNRRA and coordinated the work of all the forces involved in aiding the Jews in the country, including the representative institutions of both the Yishuv and the Jewish DPs.[19]

Though frequently clashing over methods and approaches with the Zionist organizations, the apolitical JDC supported and integrated in its rehabilitative programs both the facilities and the activities already launched by Jewish soldiers, because of their functionality and rehabilitative capacity. In particular, the JDC mission in Italy looked at "the money spent for educational and recreational purposes [as the] most productive of morale building values" and at hachsharot as "excellent opportunities" to make Jewish DPs acquaint themselves again with a homely environment and normal style of living.[20] As a consequence of the autonomy, mediation and support of the JDC, the UNRRA accepted these programs as models of active welfare in line with the principles advocated by the international humanitarianism of that time.[21]

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[18] On the UNRRA mission in Italy see: Silvia Salvatici, " 'Not enough food to feed the people'. L'UNRRA in Italia (1944-1945)," *Contemporanea. Rivista di Storia dell'800 e del '900* 1 (2011): 83-99; on the management of the refugee emergency in Italy see Silvia Salvatici, "Between National and International Mandates: Displaced Persons and Refugees in Post-War Italy," *Journal of Contemporary History* 49, no. 3 (2014): 514-536.

[19] On the cooperation between the UN refugee agencies and the JDC see Chiara Renzo, " 'Our Hopes Are Not Lost Yet': The Jewish Displaced Persons in Italy: Relief, Rehabilitation and Self-understanding (1943-1948)," *Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History* 12 (December 2017): 101-104.

[20] Letter from Benjamin N. Brook to Julian L. Tomlin, 15 December 1945, Italy: Hachsharoth, 1945-1950, NY AR194554/4/44/12/656, Archives of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (hereafter AJDC), New York; Contents: Country – Italy, 18 February 1947, Italy, General, 1946, NY AR194554/4/44/2/628, AJDC.

[21] Under the JDC-UNRRA agreement, the Jewish DPs living in hachsharot had the status of "out-of-camp refugees," eligible to receive UNRRA assistance. The agreement was limited to only 7,500 Jewish DPs, for whom UNRRA guaranteed 3.000 Lira per person monthly and took on responsibility for providing basic necessities, i.e. housing, food, clothing, etc. After many difficulties the JDC was able to renew the same agreement with the International Refugee

The second change relates to the consequences of the Jewish Agency's new policy regarding aliyah, that now sacrificed quality for quantity, and the rising influence of the Yishuv in the refugee camps. By the end of the summer of 1945, the Center for the Diaspora was discussing alternative ways to continue its program among Jewish DPs, which was now threatened by the Jewish Brigade's relocation to Belgium. For this purpose, the Merkaz La-Golah established a unified pioneering Zionist organization, the Merkaz He-Halutz, and urged the Yishuv to send teachers and educators to Italy. The arrival of the civilian emissaries of the pioneering movements and the parties which, at that time, formed the political forces within the Jewish Agency definitely compromised the unity advocated by Jewish soldiers.

Complaining that the activities of the Center for the Diaspora put the the Mapai in a hegemonic position at the expense of the other parties, many shlichim started a political campaign to recruit more affiliates from the "pioneering reservoir of the Diaspora" living in the refugee camps.[22] From that moment on, in a way that reproduced the political tensions characterizing the Yishuv of that time, each hachsharah managed by the Merkaz He-Halutz was affiliated to a specific movement among Gordonia, Dror, Ha-No'ar Ha-Tzionì, Ha-Bonim, Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir, Ha-'Oved, Po'alei 'Agudat Israel and Po'alei Mizrahi.

Organization (IRO), which replaced UNRRA from mid-1947. Letter from Jacob L. Trobe to Mr. H. Katzki, 19 February 1947, Italy 1947, G 45-54/4/13 /14/ IT.107, AJDC.

[22] Yakov Markowitzky, "An elite servant or a hunter of political souls. Emissaries of the working-class settlement and the Zionist pioneering movements in the DP camps in Italy (1945-1948,", *Dapim Lehaker Ha-Tkufat Ha-Shoah, Institute for the Study of the Holocaust Period* (1998): 131-148, [Hebrew].

Fig. 3. Aldouby and representatives of the groups "Nitzanim" and "Dror" from the youth village in Santa Maria al Bagno during the joint Sukkot celebration of the UNRRA DP camps in Lecce province, southern Italy, 1946, Photo 23/1, Aldouby's Private Collection, Jerusalem.

The emissaries' activities were directly linked to the underground activities of *Brichah* and the Mossad le-Aliyah Bet, whose illegal immigrants were selected from the refugee camps and the hachsharot according to migration quotas which reflected the political consensus of the pioneering movements in Palestine. In recent years, historians have been able to estimate that up to seventy or seventy-five hachsharot existed in Italy between 1946 and 1948.[23] Moreover, from the analysis of the records of the Merkaz He-Halutz, additional statistical data has emerged: between August 1945 and August 1948 around 19,800 Jews left from Italy with the Aliyah Bet, and 80% of them came from the hachsharot.[24]

[23] For an overall picture of the hachsharot in postwar Italy see Arturo Marzano, "Relief and rehabilitation of Jewish DPs after the Shoah: The Hachsharot in Italy (1945-48)," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 18, no. 3 (2019): 314-329.

[24] He-Halutz Ba-Brichah U-Be-Ha'apalah 1946-1949, Testimonies, AR-T-00041-021, Massuah Archives (hereafter MA), Tel Itzhak, Israel [Hebrew].

The Role of Culture: Zvi Aldouby in the Santa Maria al Bagno DP Camp

While working for their ultimate goal—i.e., the aliyah of as many Jewish survivors as possible—emissaries developed varied programs to educate Jewish DPs about Zionism and strengthened already existing institutions to focus on this purpose. As noted by Ada Sereni, one of the first Italian Jewish pioneers and a leading figure of the Mossad Le-Aliyah Bet in post-war Italy, the emissaries' activism among Jewish DPs was deleterious but at the same time necessary. On the one hand, the pervasive Zionist propaganda and the internal divisions within the Merkaz He-Halutz caused disconnections and negatively affected the challenging life of Jewish DPs in hachsharot and refugee camps. Indeed, Jewish DPs often displayed disappointment over the emissaries' failure to honor their promise of an imminent aliyah. On the other hand, Sereni also recognized in the emissaries a driving force that stimulated Jewish DPs to transcend their current situation by focusing on the future. Indeed, the emissaries' arrival bolstered the cultural and educational activities that had been organized in refugee camps and hachsharot since the beginning of the piecemeal liberation of the country in 1943.

In fact, OJRI created the Culture and Education Division, in charge of designing a comprehensive program which included general education, cultural and religious activities, vocational training projects, recreation and sports. Supervised and supported by the JDC Educational Department and UNRRA, the OJRI arranged a system of kindergartens and schools for children between 3 and 18 years old, trained teachers, opened club and reading rooms, supported the organization of dramatic and choral groups, bands, orchestras and sport teams, and distributed reading and writing material, as well as sport equipment.[25] Not surprisingly, the Merkaz He-Halutz played a leading role in designing the educational programs both in the hachsharot, where it directly dictated the guidelines, and indirectly in the refugee camps through its members working in the UNRRA Welfare Team. Among them was Zvi Aldouby, who in June 1946 was assigned by the Merkaz He-

[25] In 1947 the Culture and Education Division of OJRI was able to open ten kindergartens for around 250 children and 46 classes for around 800 children of school age living in the refugee camps. The school program included three main curricula: general subjects (mathematics, geography, science, history and geography of Eretz Israel), Jewish studies (Bible and Hebrew), and artistic subjects (drawing, music, gymnastics, handcrafts). See Report, Subject: Various Reports, July 19 1946, Italy General 1946, p. 6, AJDC.

Halutz to the UNRRA DP camp n. 34 in Santa Maria al Bagno as coordinator of "cultural affairs."[26] He, indeed, concentrated all his efforts into improving the school system and actively involved Jewish DPs in cultural activities, especially through theater and performance arts.

When Aldouby arrived in Santa Maria al Bagno, at the southern edge of Italy's "heel," there were 1,995 Jewish DPs temporarily accommodated in several clusters of villas along the coast. At that time, the Merkaz He-Halutz reported that some of them were organized in six hachsharot located within the refugee camp itself and affiliated to different movements: one to Gordonia, one to Ha-No'ar Ha-Tzioni, two to Ha-'Oved, one to Po'alei Agudat Israel and another one to Po'alei Mizrahi. This estimate included 201 children up to seven years old and another 84 between the ages of seven and eighteen.[27]

Faced with this diverse population, Aldouby advocated a general socialist Zionist approach, conceiving his educational task as a national duty and insisted on the importance of giving a "distinct pedagogical and pioneer character" to every educational and cultural activity.[28] Aldouby documented the tensions behind the development of such activities in the camps and hachsharot, helping us understand how culture was envisaged by some emissaries as a powerful political tool for both the rehabilitation of survivors and the construction of their pioneering identity.

Since his arrival in Santa Maria al Bagno, Aldouby prioritized the school education of children and teenagers, most of whom lived in the above-mentioned youth village founded by Jewish soldiers. Aware of the difficulties of dealing with young DPs with different backgrounds and traumatic past experiences, he drafted several questionnaires to learn about their previous school years, their personalities and attitudes.[29] Aldouby then designed a curriculum that included both traditional

[26] Official Mission – Days and nights, undated, File 126, p.1, ZAPA, [Hebrew].

[27] Monthly Report – Southern Camps, August 1, 1946, Italy General 1946, NY AR194554/4/44/2/628, AJDC; He-Halutz Ba-Brichah U-Be-Ha'apalah 1946-1949, Testimonies, AR-T-00041-021, pp. 66-74, MA, [Hebrew].

[28] Education to-day, undated, File 222, ZAPA.

[29] Pedagogical-medical questionnaire for refugee children in the Diaspora, 1946, File 170, ZAPA, [Hebrew]; Questionnaire for the educator, undated, File 171, ZAPA, [Hebrew].

school subjects and extracurricular activities aimed at strengthening their knowledge of Jewish traditions and life in Eretz Israel.[30]

The majority of the children in Santa Maria al Bagno were orphans or sons and daughters of survivors of Eastern European origins. Only a few of them, especially the oldest ones, were Jews of Yugoslav origin whose families had been liberated by the Allies from Fascist internment camps in Italy between 1943 and 1944. From Aldouby's papers it emerges that he was able to establish soon an affectionate and constructive relationship with the first group of children, while his relationship with the Yugoslav children and their families was quite complicated. The conflicts between the Yugoslav Jewish DPs in Santa Maria al Bagno and Aldouby essentially arose from his idea that the "sons of Israel" should be rigorously educated within a Jewish—and preferably Zionist—surrounding. He was concerned that the Yugoslav Jewish children attended the high school in the nearby town, and were brought there every day by UNRRA's trucks. From Aldouby's perspective, these children were educated "in the shadow of the cross, [...] in Jesuit schools on the knees of the clergy," and risked having their attachment to Eretz Israel compromised. For this reason, he asked UNRRA's support to organize a high-school class for them within the refugee camp, but his proposal was not accepted, supposedly because of the general lack of teachers and the difficulty of supporting schools for small groups of students. Aldouby's suggestion was also opposed by the parents of this group of high-school students, who encouraged their children to learn Italian and obtain the Italian diploma, which could be more useful for their plans to emigrate to South America. Eventually, however, during the summer holidays Aldouby was able to engage the Yugoslav children in Hebrew classes and several social activities (a choir, sports, preparation for the celebration of Sukkot).[31]

An extensive collection of drawings, letters and greetings cards produced by his young students in the DP camps demonstrate his close relationship with these children and the results of his teachings. In developing his educational and cultural programs, Aldouby was very attentive to the needs of each category of Jewish DPs in Santa Maria al Bagno and designed an extensive range of activities in order to

[30] Three-year curriculum, 2 December 1946, File 124, ZAPA, [Hebrew].
[31] Official Mission – Days and nights, undated, File 126, p. 11, ZAPA, [Hebrew].

extend the pioneering knowledge to the widest possible audience. Beyond his commitment to organized formal education, he submitted to the UNRRA a detailed program and budget to organize summer colonies for children with the ultimate goal of facilitating their physical and mental recovery and helping them boost their community bonds "in an atmosphere of happiness and creative activities."[32] For the Jewish DPs living in the hachsharot he organized a series of lectures on the history of the Yishuv, the administrative and political composition of the Jewish Agency and the other Jewish institutions in British Palestine.[33] Moreover, for the adults, he outlined the project for a "mobile popular university" with the purpose of offering basic lectures on different topics (arithmetic, natural physics, geography, economics, history and arts), supported by illustrations, diagrams, projectors.[34]

However, what emerges as the constant and most characterizing feature of Zvi Aldouby's educational mission in Italy is the use of performance arts, and especially theater, which he considered an "influential channel of pioneering education."[35]

Aldouby's Theater: A Springboard Toward a New Identity

Aldouby's private archives include a rare collection of scripts and sketches that he prepared for theatrical performances and schools' exhibitions. On the one hand, as we shall see in the second part of this article, he dedicated his mission to the establishment of a dramatic circle which could put on stage a Zionist-oriented repertoire. On the other, in his role as teacher and educator, Aldouby arranged several recitals and plays for children. Indeed, he frequently organized public events that, in turn, became not merely a way to entertain or share his students' achievements, but also served as a medium to reach the camp population at large and revive their abruptly halted connection with Jewish culture and traditions,

[32] Summer Colony for Jewish refugee-children, April 23, 1947, File 216, ZAPA.
[33] Course for workers in IRO-JDC hachsharot, undated, File 218, ZAPA, [Hebrew].
[34] Mobile popular university, October 22, 1946, File 213, ZAPA, [Hebrew].
[35] Zvi Aldouby to Dobkin, February 10, 1947, File 167, ZAPA, [Hebrew].

rekindling their sense of belonging to a specific "ethnic and national group," as Aldouby used to say.[36]

Artistic expressions and performances by Jewish DPs are mentioned in many studies on DP camps and hachsharah in Europe. As for Italy, the picture is still patchy, but Aldouby's archives offer a unique opportunity to understand the political role of theater as an educational and ideological tool for encouraging aliyah.

In Italy, OJRI (since its foundation in 1945) recognized the importance of the promotion of cultural and artistic events, and entrusted it to the Artistic Ensemble. This was a group of Jewish DP intellectuals and artists (including writers, musicians, singers, dancers, actors, and painters), directed by the Latvian poet Menahem Riger and based in the Kibbutz Omanut (art, in Hebrew) in Castelgandolfo, near Rome. The Artistic Ensemble was indeed in charge of touring refugee camps and hachsharot in small mobile units to organize classes, perform, train instructors, encourage and organize artistic activities.[37]

The leaders and the performances of the Artistic Ensemble received great coverage in the Yiddish press circulating among the Jewish DPs, which reported about seventy concerts and theatrical productions in 1947. According to *In Gang*, the literary magazine directed by the Union of the Jewish Writers, Journalists and Artists in Italy (members of Kibbutz Omanut), the Artistic Ensemble was created "to bring joy to the refugees through words and songs" and its revival of the (diasporic) Jewish culture in the refugee camps was interpreted as a form of revenge:[38]

> The Germans exterminated the Jews. But for their culture they found no gas chamber. Culture survived. … Revenge! Revenge was demanded by the thousands of writings left on the walls of German prisons. [...] And

[36] Throughout his writings, Zvi Aldouby often used the Hebrew term 'eda (עדה), ethnic group, to refer to the Jewish DPs.

[37] Monthly Report – Southern Camps, August 1, 1946, Italy General 1946, NY AR194554/4/44/2/628, AJDC.

[38] The Yiddish magazine *In gang: khoydesh-zhurnal far literatur un kunst* (On the move: Monthly newspaper of literature and art) was published by the Jewish DPs in Rome between March 1947 and February 1949. Martina Ravagnan, "I campi Displaced Persons per profughi ebrei stranieri in Italia (1945-1950)," *Storia e Futuro* 30 (2012): 20-21.

> revenge means that not only we live, but that we are creative. The Germans have not achieved their purpose. [...] We are creative, we create cultural works, even when we are on the move, even during a short stop, even in a cabin or in a shack on the way.[39]

A cross-analysis of the DPs' press accounts and Aldouby's papers allows us to explore the tensions between the Jewish DPs' natural attitude to look at theater as an element of continuity with the past, and Aldouby's vision of theater as a medium that could help Jewish DPs build a new sense of belonging to Eretz Israel. From Aldouby's writings and notes on the organization of the school's exhibitions in Santa Maria al Bagno, redemption, heroism and sacrifice emerge as common themes, as was typical of Zionist pioneering repertoire. Through performance arts he showed his ability to elaborate these themes in a way that associated the heroic feats of Biblical figures and the pioneers' enterprises in the Land of Israel to the Jewish DPs' resistance and struggle for aliyah in the DP camps. Shavuot, for instance, was taught by Aldouby as the festival of reaping and first fruits but also as a "historical and national festivity," which celebrated the Jews' longed-for and painful journey to their homeland, where they could eventually become pioneers by cultivating the land, digging wells, and planting trees.[40]

[39] This quote is from the article "From the Editorial Board" which appeared in the *In gang* 1 in March 1947. The original document translated from Yiddish to Italian is quoted in Martina Ravagnan, "I profughi ebrei in Italia nel secondo dopoguerra (1945-1950)," (MA diss., University of Bologna, 2011), 65. I thank Martina Ravagnan for giving me access to her unpublished MA dissertation.

[40] Shavuot Party Sketch – The Feast of the First Fruits, May 1947, File 162, ZAPA, [Hebrew].

Fig. 4. A drawing of a student in Santa Maria al Bagno school: next to a cultivated land, a kid plays with a dreidel (the four-sided spinning top, played during the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah), File 208, p. 16, ZAPA.

A few months later, during the Hanukkah celebrations organized in Santa Maria al Bagno to reunite the children of the four refugee camps in the province of Lecce, Aldouby decided to put on stage the Maccabean Revolt.[41] In the short script he prepared—in part inspired by the opera "The Maccabees" by the Russian Anthon Rubinstein—he emphasized the audacity of Judah Maccabee and his army of Jewish dissidents in recapturing Jerusalem from Antiochus IV and equated such events with the Jewish DPs' wish to redeem the land through aliyah. The Jewish DP children in charge of opening the lightning ceremony of the *hanukkiah* (nine-branched candelabrum lit during the eight-day holiday of Hanukkah) recited the following lines from Aldouby's script:

[41] The Jewish Agency for Eretz Israel – Welfare Unit from the Yishuv in Italy, December 25, 1946, File 131, ZAPA, [Hebrew].

We, the children of Israel, raise our national flag in honor of Hanukkah to celebrate our salvation thanks to the Maccabees. We, now Israeli refugees in refugee camps, turn our eyes and hearts to our brothers who are building Zion, fighting for the establishment of Israel and its redemption. From generation to generation, we commemorate our Maccabean ancestors who gave their lives in honor of Israel and its freedom. Few fought against many and won. May the Maccabean heroes be a model for us. Nothing in the world will prevent us from emigrating to Israel, where we will build and be rebuilt. We will not be silent and we will not stop until we can redeem our surviving land. With aliyah, work and defense there will be Israel, and it will be a free state.[42]

Fig. 5. The Maccabeans, File 208, 8, ZAPA.

[42] The Maccabean Revolt, undated, File 166, ZAPA, [Hebrew].

Fig. 6. Hanukkah celebrations at Santa Maria al Bagno in December 1946, Photo 19/2, Aldouby's Private Collection, Jerusalem.

Theatrical plays—by school children, professional actors or amateurs who performed on stage for the first time in the DP camps—were massively attended by Jewish DPs. It also happened that some young DPs, such as Helga Freund, had the chance to enjoy theater only during their stay in Santa Maria al Bagno:

> [...] there was the theater in Yiddish. We, the children, understood it because we spoke German at home, so it didn't take long to understand Yiddish. We also took part in the performances. They taught us to dance.

> It was the first time I stepped on a stage. [...] There, for the first time, I heard about "The Dybbuk." I remember that the plot aroused identification, enthusiasm and interest. Certainly, even today I can tell you that there were high standard performances. Absolutely top-notch! There were talented artists.[43]

In fact, archival sources testify that the dramatic circles born out of the initiative of DPs in Italy mostly dramatized the most famous Yiddish plays, such as Sholem Aleichem's *Tuvya the Milkman*, H. Leivick's *The Golem*, and S. Ansky's *The Dybbuk*.[44] For many of the Jewish DPs, these familiar Yiddish plays offered a sense of intimacy, reconnecting them with their past, and restoring their sense of home and family.[45]

The revival of Yiddish theater in the DP camps was also possible thanks to the presence of many professional actors among the Jewish DPs. In Italy, there was the Polish actor Yonas Turkov, who for some time coordinated the dramatic circle in the Scuola Cadorna DP camp (near Milan) and was a member of the Union of Jewish Writers, Journalists and Artists. In an article which appeared in the *In Gang* magazine in 1947, Turkov confirmed that theater among the *She'erit Ha-Pletah* was a natural continuation of the interwar Jewish theatrical tradition.[46] Another interesting perspective is offered by Ella Florsheim's study on Yiddish theater in

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[43] Excerpt from Helga Freund's testimonies, available online. Accessed March 31, 2022, http://www.profughiebreinpuglia.unisalento.it/index.php/documents/biographies/132-helga-freund.html.

[44] Contents: Country – Italy, February 18, 1947, Italy, General, 1946, NY AR194554/4/44/2/628, AJDC; Report for the Month of January 1947, March 15, 1947, Italy, Refugees 1947, NY AR194554/4/44/9/662, AJDC.

[45] The use of Yiddish in the DP camps is even more relevant in relation to the contemporary marginalization of Yiddish culture, which was perceived as the antithesis to the hegemonic pioneering Hebrew culture and was the target of outright attacks in the Yishuv. On the power dynamics between Hebrew and Yiddish at a time of nation building see: Benjamin Harshav, *Language in a Time of Revolution* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999). For an overview on the emergence of the Yiddish literary and press production in the DP camps in Germany see: Lewinsky Tamar, "Dangling roots? Yiddish Language and Culture in the German Diaspora," in *"We are here": New Approaches to Jewish Displaced Persons in Postwar Germany*, eds. Avinoam Patt J. and Berkowitz Michael (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2010), 308-334.

[46] This information is taken from the article "The theater among the Sherith Ha-Pletah" written by Yonas Turkov for the *In gang* in 1947. The original document translated from Yiddish to Italian is cited in Ravagnan "I profughi ebrei," 75.

the DP camps in Germany. She argues that Jewish DPs' preference for the most celebrated Yiddish plays and playwrights reflected

> [...] an attempt by the theater artists [in the DP camps] to anchor themselves in the familiar and universally shared motifs of yesteryear. This retrospective tendency found further expression in the fact that the theater of the She'erit Hapleta was almost completely absent any Zionist content despite the pronounced Zionist identity of the DPs themselves. In this context, too, preoccupation with their shared past superseded an unknown future.[47]

As evidence of the picture depicted so far, at his arrival in Santa Maria al Bagno, Aldouby found the local DP dramatic circle "still stuck in the diaspora."[48] As we shall see, this motivated him to trigger a lively political discussion both in the camps and within the Merkaz He-Halutz. Indeed, stimulating Jewish DPs' creativity and interest in the Jewish traditions and the pioneers' sacrifices to build Eretz Israel became crucial aspects in Aldouby's mission. During his stay in Italy, Aldouby focused on creating a vibrant cultural life by organizing concerts, lectures, dance performances, theater shows, and art exhibitions.[49] He saw the cultural activities in the camp as a way to provide a communal feeling of belonging, and to rebuild the sense of personal and collective humanity.[50] For these reasons, in his reports Aldouby asked the Merkaz He-Halutz and the Jewish Agency to

[47] Ella Florsheim, "Yiddish theater in the DP Camps," *Yad Vashem Studies* 40, no. 2 (2012): 123.
[48] Official Mission – Days and nights, undated, File 126, p. 8, ZAPA, [Hebrew and Yiddish].
[49] Zvi Aldouby succeeded in extending and strengthening the cultural programs in Santa Maria al Bagno DP camp. He facilitated the establishment of a dance company for girls called Banot Ha-'Emek (The Girls of the [Jezreel] Valley), led by the pianist Ella and the choreographer Leah Almuly. Aldouby also organized several exhibitions, among them that of Jewish DP painter Albert Alkal'ay and an exhibition on the Jewish National Fund. Official Mission – Days and nights, undated, File 126, p. 9, ZAPA, [Hebrew and Yiddish]; Appreciation letter to Leah Almuly, undated, File 333, ZAPA, [Hebrew]; The Jewish Agency for Eretz Israel – Welfare Unit from the Yishuv in Italy, December 25, 1946, File 131, pp. 5-6, ZAPA, [Hebrew].
[50] See among the others: Reviews of the Haverim on what has been done, 6 May 1947, File 129, p. 6, ZAPA, [Hebrew].

send emissaries specifically qualified in the fields of music, dance, and especially theater.[51]

Recognizing the value of theater in supporting the refugees' rehabilitation and promoting a Zionist agenda, Aldouby formed a dramatic circle, naming it "Tkumah" (in Hebrew, Revival). This complex twofold aspect of theater as a social event, and as an educational and ideological tool, faced many challenges during Aldouby's mission. Is it possible to reconcile the tension between caring for the refugees' immediate needs while also promoting Zionist ideology to encourage aliyah? Grappling with this question in his journal, letters and reports, Aldouby turns to theater as a way to attend to both aspects of his mission in Italy.

Part II

The Tkumah Dramatic Circle

Aldouby recognized theater as both a form of social event that could temporarily alleviate Jewish DPs' harsh memories and long wait in the refugee camps, and as a powerful "channel" to advocate Zionist ideals. When Aldouby arrived in Santa Maria al Bagno, a local theater company, the Aufbau (in Yiddish, Construction), already existed. Many of its members were politically affiliated with the Jewish national movement opposing Zionism, namely the Bund,[52] and the company mostly staged Yiddish dramas representing the Jewish *shtetl* or Yiddish romantic comedies. [53] For Aldouby, both the dramas and the comedies nostalgically

[51] Theater scholarship extensively focused on the role of amateur troupes as social agents in times of crisis. For a preliminary discussion see: Augusto Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1979); Augusto Boal, *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* (London: Routledge, 1992); Helen Nicholson, *Applied Drama* (Palgrave: Macmillan, 2005); James Thompson, *Applied Theatre Bewilderment and Beyond* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2006).

[52] The Bund (abbreviation of General Jewish Workers Union in Lithuania, Poland and Russia) was a Jewish socialist party founded in Russia in 1897. The Bund's ideology supported the use of Yiddish, autonomy and secular Jewish nationalism. However, in sharp opposition to Zionism, the Bund envisaged a Jewish national project in Eastern Europe. For an overview see Jack Jacobs, *Jewish Politics in Eastern Europe: The Bund at 100* (New York: New York University Press, 2001).

[53] The Aufbau's repertoire—defined by Aldouby "as old as Methuselah"—included *Der Get* (The

portrayed a Jewish world that no longer existed. He criticized this repertoire for holding onto old ideas that neither addressed nor reflected the sense of urgency in the precarious condition of European Jewry:

> 1946: Jews with numbers tattooed in their flesh, refugees from crematoria and death wagons, still stuck on the "Roman sandbar," embarrassed with nowhere to go...[...] Ruins. Mass graves. Entire communities obliterated only yesterday, a fiery ever-turning sword on the crossroads.[54] A fateful struggle for the resurrection and rebuilding of the nation. Landmarks are needed. Where to? And those [people saying]: "Only not politics..." [...] And you, coming from the Land of Israel, be practical and do not corrupt your words on deaf ears, all common sense and the burden of proof will not be useful – and we have no time! [...] Shake up the rotting green algae on the stagnant water of the swamp and instead of "croaking frogs" you will hear the word of the Land of Israel in the camps.[55]

According to Aldouby, then, theater in the camp should not recall a lost past but rather reconfigure a new way towards a Jewish future. It should present questions and invite the audience to reflect on their path in order to establish "landmarks" necessary to reach the place they wish to go to.[56]

Less than a month after his arrival, Aldouby wrote a short play called *Le-'Ezrat Ha-'Am* (For the Help of the Nation) based on Bialik's texts.[57] The play explored the concept of exile (*galut*) and redemption (*ge'ula*) and brought up the "Israeli-pioneering local color."[58] Performing Zionist themes on stage caused tensions

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Divorce) a Jewish romantic comedy by Shalom-Alichem, and "Rozhinkes mit Mandlen" (Raisins and Almonds), a poem by Abraham Goldfaden. Official Mission – Days and nights, undated, File 126, p. 8, ZAPA, [Hebrew and Yiddish].

[54] This is a Biblical reference to the expulsion from the Garden of Eden, see: *Genesis* 3:24.

[55] Official Mission – Days and nights, undated, File 126, p. 8, ZAPA, [Hebrew and Yiddish].

[56] In Hebrew, Zvi Aldouby uses the term "*tziunei derekh*" which can be translated as landmarks, signposts, milestones, road-marks. It carries a rich meaning as it references Jeremiah's prophecy of Israel's return from exile after the destruction of the First Temple. See *Jeremiah*, 31:21: "Set up road signs; put up guideposts. Take note of the highway, the road that you take. Return, Virgin Israel, return to your towns."

[57] Report (scrap of paper), July 28,1946, File 310, ZAPA, [Hebrew].

[58] Draft of a letter to Chaim Epelboim, July 16, 1946, File 322, ZAPA, [Hebrew].

between members of the dramatic circle as well as with other DPs affiliated with the Bund. Due to these political conflicts, some of the talented actors of the Aufbau quit, and the dramatic circle fell apart.[59] However, shortly afterwards, Aldouby formed the Tkumah. To prevent future contrasts, Aldouby required all new company members to sign in advance a statement declaring that, as part of this new dramatic circle, they agreed that the Tkumah would pursue the official Zionist agenda, and would work and behave accordingly. This statement also specified that the members would work in a friendly and kind spirit, respect the time schedule of the performances, and make every effort to ensure the success of the group.[60]

Aldouby chose Yiddish to be the language for Tkumah, prioritizing the refugees' ability to perform and comprehend the show in a familiar language. More precisely, the repertoire he selected for Tkumah consisted of plays that were performed in Hebrew by the Habima Theater Company, translated into Yiddish by himself. This was an unconventional decision, given the centrality of the Hebrew language in Zionist cultural activities among DPs. On the one hand, we assume that this was a practical choice based on a question of language proficiency: Yiddish was better known than Hebrew among Jewish DPs (as proved by their thriving publication of Yiddish newspapers and magazines). On the other, considering the specific role attributed by Aldouby to theater, we interpret the choice of Yiddish as an attempt to utilize this familiar language as a bridge rather than a barrier in the Jewish DPs' training for aliyah.

[59] Official Mission – Days and nights, undated, File 126, pp. 8-9, ZAPA, [Hebrew and Yiddish].
[60] Ibid., p. 10.

Fig. 7. Tkumah dramatic circle (Aldouby seats in the first row, the second from the left), 1946, Photo 3/1, Aldouby's Private Collection, Jerusalem.

The Tkumah dramatic circle was active for a period of less than six months. Despite this short time, their performances are key to understanding Aldouby's political and ideological agenda among Jewish DPs, as well as the role of theater within the training programs for aliyah, and its educational paradigms. As documented by Aldouby, the company endured many ideological tensions, which ultimately resulted in two performances: [61] *The Golem* by H. Leivick—a traditional play of the Yiddish theater that concerns the themes of Jewish persecution and redemption in Europe—and *This Land* by A. Ashman, written in the Yishuv in 1942, that addresses the challenges of aliyah. What is the significance of selecting these plays as Tkumah's repertoire? What was the impact of featuring them in this particular order? The analysis of these performances helps us understand the interplay between theater, ideology, and Jewish identity formation in DP camps.

Aldouby's journals offer insights surrounding the ideologies that prompted the selection and re-adaptation of these plays, underlining the need to rebuild Jewish DPs' sense of self. In one instance, Aldouby writes in his private journal of a conversation he had on his first night in the camp with one of the refugees, who

[61] The work of the Emissary from Eretz Israel – The Dramatic Circle Tkumah and Presentation of Ha-Golem Directed by Zvi Aldouby undated, File 335, ZAPA, [Hebrew].

referred to himself as "an empty shell, ruins of men."[62] Therefore, "to transform this dust of man into a group of workers who shall go to the Land [of Israel]" became Aldouby's mission.[63] In this sense, he saw the Jewish refugee as a sort of *golem*, a lifeless body that needs to rise from the ashes and be filled with spirit and only then can go to the promised land.[64] In this study, based on Aldouby's notes about the productions, the textual adaptation, the stage design and the reception among the Jewish DPs, we uncover the impact of theater not only as a leisure activity but as a new form of *hachsharah*, aimed at rebuilding the "figure of the Jew" first, as the necessary preliminary step to shape the "Zionist Jew," in both body and mind. Drawing on the repertoire of the Habima Theater Company,[65] Aldouby uses *The Golem* and *This Land* to raise pressing questions surrounding Jewish redemption, offering aliyah as a political solution for Jewish life after the Holocaust.

The Golem and the Question of Jewish Redemption

Tkumah performed *The Golem* for the first time at Santa Maria al Bagno in November 1946.[66] The premiere, according to Aldouby, was a big success:

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[62] Official Mission – Days and nights, undated, File 126, p. 3, ZAPA, [Hebrew and Yiddish].

[63] Activities in Hachsharot Ha-'Oved and Kibbutzim, undated, File 320, ZAPA, [Hebrew].

[64] The word "golem" originated in the Bible, in *Psalms*, 139:16 ("Your eyes saw my unformed substance [...]"), referring to an embryonic or incomplete substance, connoting an unfinished human made of raw material. In modern Hebrew, the word is used with the meaning of "dumb" or "helpless." Correlating with the trope of the golem figure, the word is also used as a metaphor for a mindless entity who serves a master without thought. In this paper we use the spelling "the Golem" for the tale's name, *The Golem* for the play's title and "the golem" to refer to the character.

[65] The Habima Theater Company was formed in Moscow in 1917 as a professional Hebrew theater, and forms now the National Theater of Israel. Habima was known for its dedication to Hebrew and the Zionist cause, and famously toured with *The Golem* around Europe, Palestine, and America. For further reading see: Shelly Zer-Zion, *Habima in Berlin: The Institutionalization of a Zionist Theatre* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2015).

[66] In 1946, *The Golem* was performed three times in Santa Maria al Bagno (September 29, October 2, and November 25). After this success the group toured the nearby DP camps in southern Italy—Santa Maria di Leuca (December 6 and 7), Santa Cesarea (December 19), and Tricase—and was permitted to perform in the camps and hachsharot in the Rome area and in northern Italy. Ha-Golem, undated, File 195, ZAPA, [Hebrew]; Notebook 2, October-December 1946, File 202, p. 18,

> *The Golem* premiered in the camp! A big audience arrived. The show ran for 3 hours, outside in the cold it started to drizzle but the audience asked to continue. I was surprised by the enthusiastic acting of the group and by the wonderful reaction of the crowd.[67]

Fig. 8. The creation of the Golem, 1946, Photo 5/1, Aldouby's Private Collection, Jerusalem.

The Golem by H. Leivick (1888-1962) was published in 1921 in Yiddish as a dramatic poem in eight scenes, and was first performed by the Habima Theater Company in 1925. In *The Golem*, Leivick turned to mystical and messianic themes to criticize the Russian revolution, condemning the use of violence while underscoring the catastrophic dimensions of messianism.[68] Famously, the play draws on the European-based tale of the Golem and its creation by Judah Loew

ZAPA, [Hebrew and Yiddish]; Personal journal 1946-1947, 1 January 1947, File 293, ZAPA, [Hebrew].

[67] Official Mission – Days and nights, undated, File 126, p. 14, ZAPA, [Hebrew and Yiddish].

[68] H. Leivick—pen name of Leivick Halpern (1888-1962)—was a Yiddish writer who fled from Russia to the United States.

Ben Bezalel, the late sixteenth-century Rabbi of Prague, also known as Maharal.[69] According to the legend, Maharal created the golem from clay (or mud in some versions) to protect the Jewish community from violence caused by the blood libel. The golem, whose name was Yosel, was brought to life through the power of the Hebrew letters of God's holy name (*hashem*).[70] Every Friday evening, Maharal would take God's holy name out of the golem, turning it back into raw clay for the Shabbat, and providing him with spirit again on Sunday morning. One Friday, however, Maharal forgets to remove God's holy name and the golem transforms into a destroyer, turning against the Jewish community he was designed to protect. After hearing what the golem had done, Maharal disabled his servant and stored his remains in the synagogue's attic, forbidding anyone but his successors to enter. He kept the clay in case he would need to recreate the golem once again.

Tkumah's performance of *The Golem* was inspired by Habima's version of Leivick's iteration of the nineteenth-century folktale.[71] In the play, Maharal creates a powerful golem-redeemer to protect the Jewish community from Tadiush, a priest that persecuted the Jews. The golem follows Maharal's orders to protect the community from the blood libel Tadiush fabricated. After completing his mission, the golem disturbs the Rabbi by always seeking his company. In his misery, the golem locks the Rabbi in the attic and turns against the Jewish community, who, in his view, takes the Rabbi's attention away from him. Witnessing this tragedy, the Rabbi removes the letters of God's holy name from the golem, transforming him back into a piece of clay to protect his people. In this post-World War I text, as Maya Barzilai suggests, the golem represented a figure of both protection and violence, while its aggression "was also associated with the (failed) promise of messianic deliverance."[72] Indeed, the figure of the golem oscillates between notions of redemption and destruction, opening in the DP

[69] An acronym of his name in Hebrew: Our Great Rabbi Loew.

[70] For an overview of the versions and revisions of the Golem story see: Maya Barzilai, *Golem: Modern Wars and their Monsters* (New York: New York University Press, 2016), 5-21.

[71] The Golem's tale has many versions, as well as adaptations into literature, theater, and film. Habima's version of the play changed the golem's name from Yosel to Yehudah, a name that signifies strength and power in Jewish tradition. Interestingly, Yehudah is also Maharal's name, therefore the golem can also be seen as the rabbi's alter-ego.

[72] Barzilai, *Golem*, 6.

camps a space for the ideological debates surrounding the so-called "Jewish question" after the Holocaust.[73]

The ideological debate concerning Jewish futurity appears most explicitly at the end of the play, which differs significantly from Leivick's dramatic poem. As Atay Zitron has shown, Habima's version of the play follows the poem's basic plot, but revises the text to fit Zionist ideology concerning redemption through action.[74] In both versions, Maharal kills the golem, by turning him back to clay. But whereas Leivick's play ends with the Jewish community returning to the synagogue and reestablishing their Jewish tradition, Habima's version (and Tkumah's performance) omits this scene, replacing it with a concluding question: "who will be our saviour?"[75] This final chord at the end of the play compelled the audience to reflect on their Jewish futurity, implicitly placing Zionism and aliyah as the movement providing a solution for Jewish homelessness.

Habima changed the ending as a means of challenging a Jewish return to tradition, and, as Yair Lipshitz shows, to pave the path towards the figure and body of "the new Jew," actively seeking self-redemption. [76] Rather than a return to the synagogue—and to the old Jewish tradition—the play raises the question of Jewish futurity without providing an answer, ending on an anti-cathartic note, leaving Jewish DPs to reflect on their political state.

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[73] The adaptation of Habima's 1925 performance of Leivick's play *The Golem* was broadcast on the Israeli national radio during the Jewish New Year holiday in September 1961, a few weeks after the Eichmann Trial. For a discussion see Abeliovich, *Possessed Voices*, 81-121. The radio adaptation is available online. Accessed March 23, 2022, https://www.ruthieabeliovich.com/possessed-voices.

[74] Atay Zitron, "Habima's 'The Golem'," *The Drama Review. Jewish Theater Issue* 24, no.3 (1980): 59-68.

[75] Ibid, 68.

[76] Yair Lipshitz, "Redemption Depicted in Flesh: Past, Future, and the Work of the Actor in Habima's Performance of HaGolem," *Reshit* 1 (2009): 279-304, [Hebrew]. Lipshitz's notion of "the new Jew" is not yet the Hebrew *tzabar* (native Eretz Israel Jew) but an explicit call for change and a reconfiguration of the European Jew as a figure that actively seeks ways of survival and self-redemption. The figure of the tzabar arised in the Yishuv in the 1930s and is typically attributed to Uri Kaiser, who published an article in the newspaper *Doar hayom* (Post Today) titled "We are the Tzabar Leaves!" During the 1930s and 1940s the term evolved in both literature and art, reaching its peak with the protagonist of Moshe Shamir's *Hu halach basadot* (*He Walked in the Fields*, 1947), followed by the caricature illustrations of the fictional Srulik in the 1950s. On the evolution of the notion of *tzabar* see: Dan Urian, "Zionism in the Israeli Theatre," *Israel Affairs* 8, no. 1-2 (2001): 43-55.

The question at the play's end echoes the tension between action and inaction that appears as a thread throughout the play. In his dramaturgical notes, Aldouby reflects on the ideological significance of *The Golem*, focusing on the golem's dual image as both redeemer and destroyer. After listing the relevant scenes on the golem's creation, existence, and horrific actions towards the Jewish community, Aldouby writes:

> Is there redemption in the world?
> If so, how? (physical strength or not?)

Fig. 9. The Golem, 1946, Photo 6/1, Aldouby's Private Collection, Jerusalem.

The fraught relationship Aldouby identifies between protector and destroyer emerges not only through the figure of the golem but also through the competing worldviews of Tanchum and Maharal concerning redemption. As we will show, Maharal represents the use of physical strength as a way to actively achieve redemption, whereas Tanchum—a figure between a simpleton and a madman, who has lost his family, and predicts an impending catastrophe—advocates for

redemption via inaction. In his notes, Aldouby compares Maharal with Rabbi Akiva—a spiritual leader and influential Torah commentator who was known to support the Bar Kokhba rebellion in 132 CE.[77] Understanding Maharal through the figure of Rabbi Akiva, highlights Maharal's role as a leader with both physical and spiritual strength. Whereas Bar Kokhba's rebellion represents physical strength and the ability to actively protect the people, Jewish literature attributes to Rabbi Akiva divine knowledge and the ability to see beyond the physical world.[78] In this sense, Maharal expresses both aspects of the protection of the Jewish people: through the physical strength of the golem, and his spiritual ability to create a human-like figure from clay. Maharal, then, represents a mode of redemption through action.

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[77] Sixty years after the Kanna'im's (Zealots) revolt against the Romans that led to the destruction of Jerusalem (70 CE), Shimon Bar Kusba started another major revolt, giving hope of freedom to the Jews of Judea. Rabbi Akiva, a leading rabbi at that time, appreciated Bar Kusba and gave him the name "Bar Kochva" (son of star), recognizing him as the Messiah. But two years later the rebellion ceased and Judea was destroyed. From that time onward, Bar Kochva is depicted in Jewish literature as a complex figure: a symbolic hero fighting for independence and a warrior who used physical strength with fatal consequences. Zionism evoked Bar Kochva's figure, as well as the Maccabees, to shape a new Jewish generation that would strive to defend their Land and aspire to freedom. See: Hanan Eshel, "The Bar Kochba Revolt, 132-135," in *The Cambridge History of Judaism, volume 4, The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period*, eds William David Davies, Louis Finkelstein, and Steven T. Katz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 105-127; 105. It is interesting to note that the majority of Jewish writings at the time were written in Yavne, a village that became the Jewish people's spiritual and political center after Jerusalem's destruction. The city of Yavne was established with precisely this purpose by Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai, who opposed the rebellion and fled from Jerusalem to Yavne before the siege. As a result, in Jewish culture Yavne became associated with non-violent resistance, while Bar Kochba, together with the Makabbees, with the use of physical power to gain independence. This clearly cultural-philosophical view is evident in a letter from Zvi's brother—Moshe, who responded to Zvi's description of *The Golem*'s production: "you have preserved the Hasmoneans [the Maccabees' dynasty] and Yavne legacy in one," see Letter from Moshe Aldouby, November 10, 1947, File 737, ZAPA, [Hebrew]. For an analysis of the Bar Kokhba revolt in relation to the Zionist reconstruction of Jewish history see Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition* (Chicago - London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995).

[78] Rabbi Akiva is a powerful figure in Jewish tradition. In a famous story in the Babylonian Talmud, "The four who entered the orchard" (Hagigah 14B), Rabbi Akiva is the only one who came out with his body and soul unimpaired. The orchard in Jewish mysticism is understood to be a place where one interacts directly with God. That episode marked Rabbi Akiva as a spiritual figure, a man who had influence over both the people in the land and the divine in heaven. With that understanding of Rabbi Akiva, the similarity that Aldouby found between Rabbi Akiva and Maharal (who acts mostly in order to achieve physical redemption) became even more complex.

In contrast to Maharal, who actively protects the community and creates the golem, Tanchum represents passivity, someone who suffers greatly and awaits external redemption. At the same time, Tanchum is associated with the characters Messiah and the prophet Elijah, who, in Jewish tradition, symbolizes the spiritual redemption that one day will come.[79] Tanchum, then, represents a mode of redemption through inaction.

In between action and inaction stands the golem—a shell of a strong human body emphasizing basic needs and instincts: sleep, food, and love, capable of both protecting and harming. As Aldouby noted, the golem undergoes a transformation, going from being entirely dependent on the Maharal to becoming unconstrained.[80] His sovereignty turns into a threat to the Jewish community, resulting in him killing those he was made to protect. Tanchum's question, then, confronts the difficult role of physical strength in redemption, and the impossibility of a Jewish redemption in the diaspora.

[79] *Malachi*, 3:23. This is the source of many traditions connecting Elijah and the Messiah, including leaving an open door for Elijah as part of the Passover Seder and a famous Ashkenazi Piyut (song-prayer) for Saturday night expressing the hope that Elijah will come with the Messiah: "Elijah the prophet [...] He will soon come to us with the Messiah – the son of David." Whereas the figure of Messiah Ben-David represents spiritual redemption, physical redemption is attributed to Messiah Ben-Yosef. Joseph Klausner, *The Messianic Idea in Israel: From Its Beginning to the Completion of the Mishnah* (New York: Macmillan, 1955). Aldouby was Klausner's student at the Hebrew University in the 1930s. It is tempting to find an influence of the class he attended in his theatrical work.

[80] Ha-Golem, undated, File 195, ZAPA, [Hebrew].

Fig. 10. Tanchum and Maharal, 1946, Photo 8/2, Aldouby's Private Collection, Jerusalem.

Fig. 11. An actor of the Tkumah (Mr. M. Zinger) in the role of Tanchum asking "Who will be our saviour?" (hand-written in Yiddish at the bottom of the photo), 1946, Photo 4/3, Aldouby's Private Collection, Jerusalem.

The question of redemption was amplified through the stage design of the performance. Despite the restrictions imposed by the conditions in the camp, Aldouby and the group created a stage design of a high aesthetic standard.[81] A cubist-like painting decorated the set depicting an old Jewish community in an old *shtetl*, giving the illusion of a real place while also making it seem surreal. Inspired by Habima's production, the actors wore artistic make-up suggesting a dream-like state of archetypal characters.[82] The impact of this stage design is twofold. First, it represents the old Jewish world: in this sense Aldouby continues the "Aufbau" approach in representing a world that no longer exists, evoking traditions and nostalgia. At the same time, the surreal painting and the exaggerated makeup, which looks almost like a mask, undermine sentiments of identification and representation, creating an experience of estrangement from the world shown on the stage. Using the stage design to convey these contradictory sentiments, the visual experience intensified the inquiry into the future of European Jewry, as well as Tanchum's crucial question: who shall be our saviour?

[81] We were not able to establish if Tkumah's actors had any knowledge of Habima's shows in Palestine, thus we assume that it was Aldouby who suggested the idea of using the stage design to recall the contemporary performance of *The Golem* by Habima. We base this assumption on Aldouby's personal journals, in which he mentions his instructions for creating the stage design. Personal journal – 1946-1947, December 1946, File 293, ZAPA, [Hebrew].

[82] On the stage design of Habima's production of *The Golem* see: Citron, "Habima's 'The Golem'," 61.

Fig. 12. The Golem in Tkumah production, 1946, Photo 4/2, Aldouby's Private Collection, Jerusalem.

Fig. 13. The Golem in Habima Production, photographed by Nini and Carry Hess. Courtesy of the Habima Theater Archive, Tel Aviv.

Thus, through the story and the characters' actions, the specific ending and the stage setting, the play serves two major goals: first, to provide a shared experience of grief for those who had gone through such horror, by creating a space for communal mourning. Second, to bring attention to Jewish refugees' problematic situation and encourage them to reconsider their beliefs and chances. Through the play, Aldouby aimed to empower Jewish refugees to take ownership of their lives after the horrors they had endured in the Holocaust.

In his notes, Aldouby notes the enthusiastic response from the audience, concluding: "It must be that *The Golem* conveys the profound pain felt by those who drank the poisoned cup till its last drop."[83] Menahen Riger—director of the Artistic Ensemble—described the play's similarity with the refugees' situation, and how it led the audience to ask themselves hard question and find an answer:

> Some people are saying The Golem play is too difficult for a Jew who just left a concentration camp. However, this is not true. After watching the play twice, I saw how enthusiastically it was received by the general public. It was an awakening of consciousness [...]. The tension of the audience grows step by step while the "golem" gradually rises to become the Redeemer [...] At times, The Golem recalls in our memory the legend of Messiah Ben-Yosef, who will come before Messiah Ben-David[84] [...]. When the golem is being put down, when Tanchum "The Lord of Ruins," who carries in his distant heart the anxiety, the anguish of Israel and the sorrow of the world, shouts: "Who will save us?!" you can imagine the ghetto in flames; the threatened downfall... and on this call – an answer must come.[85]

For Aldouby, *The Golem* encapsulates the Jewish condition of being persecuted and needing an external source of redemption. The golem's violent outrage, paired with Tanchum's concluding question signal the failure of this model, paving the path to the Zionist option of self-redemption through action via aliyah. In

[83] Official Mission – Days and nights, undated, File 126, p. 14, ZAPA, [Hebrew and Yiddish].
[84] About the difference between Messiah Ben-Yosef and Messiah Ben-David see footnote 79.
[85] Official Mission – Days and nights, undated, File 126, p. 14, ZAPA, [Hebrew and Yiddish].

Aldouby's words, Tanchum in *The Golem* raises the question of redemption, "and the answer was given in *This Land* by A. Ashman."[86]

"A Taste of Israel": *This Land* and the Journey Toward Independence

Theater, as a tool to prepare the DPs for aliyah and life in Eretz Israel, served to convey not only knowledge and ideas about the land, but also, as Aldouby described it, "the taste of Israel."[87] Tkumah performed Aharon Ashman's play *This Land* for the first time on December 27, 1946.[88] *This Land* tells the story of Jewish settlers in Yirkaya, a fictional place, portraying the difficulties faced by Jewish settlers in Palestine during the late nineteenth-century. A mainstay of Habima's repertoire during the 1940s, *This Land* was first staged by Habima on September 19th , 1942 and quickly became a hit, performed 213 times and brought on tour all over the region. As Ben Ami Feingold demonstrates, *This Land* is a foundational social-cultural event for the consolidation of the Yishuv, underscoring the shared values and loss among the settlers.[89]

For Aldouby, this play provided an opportunity to grapple with Zionist ideology while also introducing the DPs to the contemporary socio-cultural debates taking place in Palestine. The play was translated from Hebrew into Yiddish and was adapted to fit the circumstances and conditions of the camp environment. Rather than performing the entire play, the performance focused on the doubts around the digging of the well in Eretz Israel and the joy of finding water.[90] In his journal, Aldouby reports:

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[86] Ibid.

[87] Letter to Menachem, November 26, 1946, File 323, ZAPA, [Hebrew].

[88] Personal journal 1946-1947, File 293, ZAPA, [Hebrew]. *This Land* was first staged by Habima on September 19, 1942 and quickly became a hit, performed 213 times and brought on tour all over the region.

[89] Directed by Baruch Chemrinsky, the initial performance was staged in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the city of Hadera, which took place against the backdrop of the bloody battles of World War II. For further reading on the performance of *This Land* and its socio-political significance in the Yishuv see: Ben-Ami Feingold, "Theater and Struggle: Hedera and 'This Land'," *Cathedra: On the History of Eretz Israel and the Yishuv* 74 (1994): 140-156, [Hebrew].

[90] A letter to Meir (Schwarz), December 28, 1946, File 326, ZAPA, [Hebrew]; Letter to Shoshana (Aldouby's sister), December 8, 1946, File 308, ZAPA, [Hebrew].

> We performed *This Land* tonight for the first time. The audience's response during the show and afterwards conveyed a longing for redemption and the love for the land – "s'iz dokh mamesh vi in Erets Isroel" [Yiddish] (this is exactly like in Eretz Israel), lips expressed here and there. One can, then, "entertain" the hearts of the people in the camps not only with Jazz and 'Kuni Lemel' but also through a distinct dream-like educational play.[91]

Fig. 14. Tkumah performing This Land during Hanukkah celebration, 1946, Photo 34/1, Aldouby's Private Collection, Jerusalem.

Aldouby's goal was to bring a piece of Eretz Israel to the DP camps. By staging *This Land,* Tkumah featured an image of Eretz Israel that was both appealing and complex, using it, as we shall see, to introduce Zionist values and train the DPs for aliyah in a threefold manner: first, performing on stage the digging of the well resonated with the core of the program developed by the emissaries of the He-Halutz in refugee camps and the hachsharot to familiarize Jewish DPs with agriculture and manual labor. Second, the play exhibits conflicting worldviews and contemporary debates among the settlers, offering Jewish DPs an honest

[91] Official Mission – Days and nights, undated, File 126, p. 15, ZAPA, [Hebrew and Yiddish].

representation of the challenges concerning aliyah. In this sense, the performance depicted Eretz Israel as a non-Utopia while empowering the pioneers' forceful act of self-redemption. Finally, the stage design, costumes, and music created a lively representation of Eretz Israel, inviting the audience to step into the experience of developing the land.

Drawing on real-life events surrounding poverty and illness, the play depicts the story of a group of settlers, and centers on the fictional Yoshfe family - the father, Yoel, his wife, Esther, their son, Pinkhas and Chana, their orphan nephew whom they adopted. Yoel serves as the leader of a group of settlers, who exhibit diverse ideological viewpoints concerning life in Eretz Israel. Aldouby describes three major difficulties that are represented in the play: illness and lack of water, frictions with the local Turkish authorities, and, importantly, the ongoing tensions and differences between Yoel and his son Pinkhas, which have colliding worldviews concerning aliyah.[92] Whereas the father is committed to making the land blossom, the son represents the intellectual, diasporic Jew: he criticizes his parents' choice of lifestyle and longs to return to Europe, where they had food, water, and other basic necessities of life. The tension between those two modes of life is reflected also in Pinkhas's romantic relationship. Pinkhas wishes to marry his relative, Chana, whose heart is set on both the land and Yaakov, a Jewish pioneer who works in the fields and the one who triumphs over the difficulties of drawing water from the well. In contrast to Pinkhas, Yaakov's character exhibits both mental and physical strength and embodies an early version of the *tzabar* (the Eretz Israel born Jew), who is committed to developing the land.[93]

Drawing on Aldouby's archival materials, Tkumah performed only the first act, with the well scene. In the second and third acts, Ashman's play illustrates the troubles the settlers had with local authorities. The drama escalates as Pinkhas turns his back on the community and collaborates with the greedy real estate agent in preventing the group from getting a license for their new settlement. Pinkhas then becomes severely ill, and on his deathbed disavows his previous behavior and pledges his loyalty to the settlers, while making Chana promise that she will never marry someone else. In the third act - the final scene of the play - we meet Chana

[92] Notes on *This Land* premier, December 29, 1946, File 483, ZAPA, [Hebrew and Yiddish].

[93] As the play's plot takes place circa 1890s, Yaakov is not considered a *tzabar*. He is, however, an early reincarnation of this trope, which is part of Ashman's 1942 audience socio-cultural life.

fifty years later, a lonely woman that has kept her promise and has not married. She is sitting near the graveyard and concludes the story: "... and so life had passed, fifty long years, in sorrow and loneliness..., but it was worth dying as you died, and worth living as I lived..., it was all worth it."[94]

Rooted in Eretz Israel, the play provided Aldouby with the possibility of moving from a repertoire based on the Jewish diaspora to a performance that conveyed Zionist values. While nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Hebrew literature set forth a Utopian view of Zion, Ashman's play pioneered an honest representation of the settlers' lived experience and everyday struggle.[95] Presenting a non-Utopian image of Palestine, the play also evokes Biblical symbols and references. Through this kind of Biblical inter-textuality, Ashman's play claims a mythical-historical Jewish feeling of belonging to the land, situating the modern Hebrew text as a bridge between past and present. As Anita Shapira suggests in her seminal work about the Bible in the making of Israeli identities:

> [t]he Bible endowed the young Jewish nationalism with a mythological-historical foundation to consolidate its distinctiveness around its ancestral land, serving as evidence of the "naturalness" of the Zionist solution to the Jewish problem [...] as opposed to the traditional Jewish outlook, which posits a linear historical progress toward redemption, Zionism offered a cyclical view of the drama of sovereignty, destruction, and redemption.[96]

In the Zionist imagination, then, aliyah is not a way of starting anew but rather a manifestation of a Jewish return to the land of the forefathers.[97] In this sense, while

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[94] Aaron Ashman, "Ha-Adama Ha-Zot," *Mahazot* 2 (Tel Aviv: Yesod, 1973), 7-54; 53-54.

[95] The first Hebrew novel, *Ahavat Zion*, written by Avraham Mapu depicts Jewish life in Jerusalem. Drawing on Biblical figures, the novel imagines a Utopian romance between Amnon and Tamar, transforming the horrific Biblical story of a brother raping his sister into a romantic love affair in which Amnon and Tamar are children of two different families that are destined to be together. Overcoming the evil forces dominating Jerusalem, they ultimately unite and build a kosher Jewish home in Jerusalem, and do so in Hebrew. For further reading on Ahavat Zion as a Utopian genre see: Yigal Schwartz, *The Zionist Paradix: Hebrew Literature and Israeli Identity* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2014).

[96] Anita Shapira, "The Bible and Israeli Identity," *AJS Review* 28, no. 1 (2004): 11-41; 13.

[97] This idea is also conveyed by the name Aldouby gave to the dramatic circle: Tkumah, meaning "revival," in contrast to Aufbau, which means "construction."

through the production of *The Golem* Aldouby addressed the notion of redemption from the perspective of Jewish persecution and mystical protection, *This Land* situated aliyah as a mode of agency and self-redemption using Biblical symbols, imagery and inter-textual references. These references appear throughout the play, and are interwoven in Ashman's dramatic language, stage directions, and imagery.

The play begins at dawn with three men on stage digging a well. The archetypal act of digging a well evokes the Biblical image of the wells owned by the forefathers, Avraham, Yitzhak, and Yaakov. In turn, each of the forefathers engaged in the search for water, and put down roots in Eretz Israel by digging a well. For that reason, Avraham names the first city he inhabits Be'er Sheva, underlining the importance of a well by putting the word Be'er (well) in its name.[98] The well as a symbol of a source of life continues to echo for both Yitzhak and Yaakov, who return to Avraham's wells to mark their rootedness. For Yaakov, the land's inability to nurture life led him to leave Canaan and go to Egypt, an act which resulted in the slavery of the Israelites. On his journey, he stops by Avraham's well in Be'er Sheva and there he receives a promise from God that his children will return to the land.[99] The well, then, appears in the Biblical narrative as a symbol for roots and nourishment, marking the coordinates of home.

Another way through which the play evokes prominent Biblical figures is through the use of names. For example, the names of the workers who dig the well are: Yaakov, Ezekiel and Daniel. While the name Yaakov refers to the ancestor who dipped into the wells that his forefathers dug with great effort when they settled in the Land of Israel (Canaan), Ezekiel and Daniel are the names of biblical figures who predicted the future redemption during the Babylonian exile after the first temple's destruction (586 BCE). Together, the names represent both the longing for the land and living in it.

As the digging of the well in the play progresses, Israel, a member of the settlers' group, passes by the digging crew on his way to the morning prayer.[100] Seeing the

[98] Biblical reference to *Genesis*, 21:30-31.

[99] Biblical reference to *Genesis*, 41:1.

[100] The name Israel was given to Yaakov by an angel after he fought with him, Biblical reference to Genesis, 32:23-31. In this way, Yaakov and Israel are completing one another: while Yaakov works to find water (physical redemption) Israel prays and prepares a place for a new Torah scroll (spiritual redemption).

workers struggling to dig, he tries to inspire them by reminding them of Avraham, the first ancestor who came to the land and struggled to dig wells but, after him, his children enjoyed the fruits of his labor. Israel quotes from the covenant between Avraham and God who promises: "I will assign this land to your offspring,"[101] emphasizing that the land was promised not only to Avraham but also to his future descendants. Through this figurative language and imagery, the performance linked the Israelite descendants with the Jewish DPs in the camp, offering the possibility of a shared future that is based on a mythical-historical past. After speaking of the ancestors, Israel also mentions a Torah that was saved from a fire during a pogrom, and that will soon be given back to the community.[102] A strong similarity can be established between the Torah scroll that survived a pogrom and finding a new home in the Land of Israel. Later in that scene, an argument between Pinkas and his father evokes a biblical reference from Exodus. In this exchange, Pinkhas expresses his unhappiness with life in Eretz Israel, and the sacrifices it demands. He emphasizes the difficulty of living in substandard conditions when they can live wherever they want. In response, his father stresses the importance of having roots and doing things that benefit the community as a whole. Amidst their argument Pinkhas cites a verse from Exodus, where the Israelites blame Moses for leading them toward death:

> Pinkas: My world is big and wide, and not all of its gates are locked!
> Yoel: The world may be big and wide, but people still need roots [...]
> Pinkhas: You are bringing malaria and fever upon us! [...] "Was it for want of graves that you brought us to die in the wilderness?" [...].[103]

Pinkhas uses this inter-textual reference to criticize the new form of Jewish life, which prefers bodily strength over intellectual study. Yoel, however, responds by referencing the same Biblical tale to emphasize the bravery the Israelites demonstrated in crossing the Red Sea, pursuing their journey from slavery to freedom in the promised land:

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[101] Biblical reference to *Genesis*, 12:7.

[102] Ashman did not refer to a specific pogrom, but rather to an archetypical event.

[103] Biblical reference to *Exodus* 14:11. Script of "This Land," undated, File 294, p. 3, ZAPA, [Yiddish].

> Yoel: If the Israelites had to wait for someone to come to build a bridge when they arrived at the red sea they would have stuck there till this very day!
> Pinkhas: It was the Jews' brain that gave them power over generations! The brain was the Jewish people weapon!
> Yoel: We did not give up on this power [...] snake! Spies!![104]

In response to Pinkhas' doubt in their mission to rebuild the land, Yoel calls him a "spy"—referencing the tale of the twelve spies sent by Moses to explore Canaan.[105] In their report to Moses, the spies were enraged by the difficulties they faced in Israel and "spread calumnies" among the Israelites about the land they had scouted.[106] As a result of this sin, the Israelites must suffer forty years wandering in the desert.[107]

Circling back to Anita Shapira's claim about Biblical references, these two prominent moments in the play create a link between the historical and mythical land of the ancestors and the Israelites, and the contemporary notion of aliyah. Eretz Israel constitutes the promise of return, and the home that holds a shared Jewish past and the hope of building a collective future. One major theme that draws on the images of the ancestors' wells and the Israelites' biblical journey from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the Land of Israel, is the transition from a miraculous existence in the wilderness to a life of independence in the Land of Israel. In the desert the Israelites drank water from a magical well and ate food provided by god (*manna*), but in the Land of Israel everything is based on their labor and hard work. Therefore, in the DP camps' reality, leaving Europe and going to Israel is maybe an uncomfortable step, but is a necessary one toward

[104] Script of "This Land," undated, File 294, p. 6, ZAPA, [Yiddish].
[105] This biblical episode, which is found in *Numbers* 13-14, tells about Moses sending twelve spies (each one representing a tribe of Israel) to scout out the Land of Canaan. After forty days of reconnaissance, they came back to the Israelites, who were camped in the desert, and brought back frightening reports about the Promised Land, except for Joshua and Caleb who described it as the land "that flows with milk and honey." In response to their unwillingness to enter the land, God punished Israel by making them wander in the desert until a new generation would be born.
[106] *Numbers*, 13:32.
[107] Script of "This Land," undated, File 294, p. 29, ZAPA, [Yiddish].

independence. In that regard, in contrast to *The Golem*, in which the community is dependent on a miraculous servant with no past, in *This Land* the people of the community, connected to their heritage and roots, are the ones that dig their own well through hard work without the help of any miracles. Furthermore, while the golem fails to bring redemption through individual effort, in *This Land* success arises from teamwork and redemption involves the entire community. As mentioned in Aldouby's comments on the play, the final scene depicting "the joy of finding water" emphasizes the power of the community: "A call comes from the well: "water" and Yaakov is being pulled up with a pot filled with fresh water. The entire community rejoices and dances along with choreography inspired by the dances of Israel."[108]

Using this aesthetic, the space of the theater becomes the space of the land, bringing the land to the people. This technique appears right in the opening scene of the digging of the well, that begins with a melancholic and romantic atmosphere underlined by sound effects and lights: "[...] Melancholy music and longing songs of night guards. Pealing bells of a camel caravan, work knocks and a mysterious shade from a red light [...]."[109] Aldouby also included in the show music and dances popular in the Yishuv, expanding the experience of Eretz Israel to include contemporary cultural features from the Tel Aviv of the 1940s. The performance staged Eretz Israel for the Jewish DPs and invited them to step into "this land," while also depicting the challenges this land entails.

Echoing the DPs' concerns surrounding this new form of life, *This Land* offers a political answer to Tanchum's concerns about Jewish persecution portrayed in *The Golem*, reconfiguring redemption as a source of inward strength. In other words, the savior is not the land as such, but the people who build it.

[108] Script of "This Land," undated, File 294, pp. 21-23, ZAPA, [Yiddish and Hebrew].
[109] Official Mission – Days and nights, undated, File 126, p. 15, ZAPA, [Yiddish and Hebrew].

Fig. 15. The dance company "Banot Ha-Emek" performing "Mayim Mayim" (Water Water), a popular Israeli folk dance adapted by Aldouby to emphasize the act of drawing water as the girls hold decorative pots mimicking the action. In the background a painting of Eretz Israel, 1946, Photo 29/1, Aldouby's Private Collection, Jerusalem.

Conclusion

This Land was performed twice at Santa Maria al Bagno and was scheduled to tour other camps. In Aldouby's view, this play would have been the first of a series of plays from the Hebrew theater that he wished to perform as a way to educate DPs about pioneering life and Zionism.[110] By the end of 1946, however, UNRRA announced that the four camps in Lecce province, including Santa Maria al Bagno, would be shut down in view of the planned reduction of the refugee camps in the country. As reported by the JDC, the news of the transfer to other refugee camps

[110] Aldouby asked his brother to send him more material from the Hebrew theater repertoire (such as: Habima, Ohel and HaMatate), as well as musical scores of songs and dance melodies. In another letter to his sister, he asked specifically for two of Ashman's plays: Ha-Choma (The Wall)—about rebuilding Jerusalem walls during the period of Shivat Zion, and Menachem Mendel. Letter to Menachem, 26 November 1946, File 323, ZAPA, [Hebrew]; Letter to Shoshana, 8 December 1946, File 308, ZAPA, [Hebrew].

plunged the Jewish DPs in an atmosphere of tension and general disappointment.[111] Camp activities ceased only in January 1947, even if "Mr. Aldouby of Di Bagni conducted classes right up to the end of February, when the school was forced to close, since all children had been transferred."[112]
In a letter to his brother, Aldouby described the DPs evacuation from Santa Maria al Bagno DP camp and the consequent dissolution of the Tkumah dramatic circle as a "miniature exile"[113]. His attempt to keep the group together through a collective transfer northward failed, since many members decided to join the Aufbau hachsharah associated with the Bund, located in a villa in Rome.[114]
With the dissolution of the Santa Maria al Bagno DP camp, Aldouby started working in the Education Department of the He-Halutz, to which he tirelessly emphasized the importance of culture and art in the Jewish DPs' educational training for aliyah. Before resigning his post in February 1948, he spent a few months in the Scuola Cadorna DP Camp (near Milan), where he established a school as well as a new dramatic circle, naming it Tkumah, that performed, yet again, *This Land*.[115]

Throughout his mission as emissary, Aldouby identified educational and cultural activities, particularly performance arts, as powerful means to anchor his Zionist program. After his first night at Santa Maria al Bagno, when he met the Jewish DP who defined himself as "a ruin of a person," Aldouby recognized that he was facing a heterogeneous humanity who needed to recover both in body and mind. He discerned that before introducing his Zionist agenda, he had to help the Jewish

[111] AJDC, Report for the Month of February 1947 – Part one: Lecce Camps Group, 8.3.1948, NY AR194554/4/44/9/662, Italy, Refugees, 1947.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Draft – Letter to Menachem, 29 January 1947, in: "Personal journal 1946-1947", File 293, ZAPA, [Hebrew]: "There is chaos and confusion in the camp, we are being moved to another camp, and everything is falling apart. [...] Tkumah is also falling apart, it feels like a miniature 2000 years of exile [...]."
[114] Letter to Dubkin – Activity updates, February 10, 1947, File 167, ZAPA, [Hebrew]: "The dramatic circle Tkumah was widely distributed, and I heard they moved to the Bund group in Rome. [...]. A project in which I invested a lot of energy, and that could have been the conduit for pioneering influence in camps in Italy and even beyond its borders."
[115] Official Mission – Days and nights, undated, File 126, p. 29, ZAPA, [Hebrew and Yiddish]; Shlichim updates n. 2, 24 December, 1946, File 131, ZAPA, [Hebrew].

DPs restore their sense of self and understand their vital role in society. In particular, Aldouby believed that by stimulating creativity among the Jewish DPs, he would be able to accomplish this preliminary step:

> At times, you may feel that your strength has diminished [...] that it was all for nothing, carried away with the wind. But this is not the case. Every evening that includes a party, concert, play, commemoration, lecture etc. [matters]. [...] See, for example, the celebration, how much support, what a deep longing for redemption we saw in the hearts, and in Leivick's play *The Golem*, what depth is explored in the fundamental issues of Israel and the Goyim [the Gentiles]. [...] Or perhaps, see the joy of finding water in the well in Ashman's play *This Land* – to see how it elevated the withered hearts [...].[116]

By incorporating theater in his educational program and discourse, Aldouby built for and with the Jewish DPs a training path towards aliyah. If *The Golem*—addressing the theme of redemption—encouraged Jewish DPs to question whether there would be a future for Jews in the Diaspora, *This Land* offered aliyah as a promising solution for Jewish life after the Holocaust. Theater indeed allowed Aldouby to debate with Jewish DPs their most urgent question "where to go?", envisaging both the struggles and the benefits that would come from the conscious choice to make aliyah. As we have shown, by performing *This Land* in Yiddish, Aldouby provided Jewish DPs with access to the daily-life challenges, sense of determination, and the dilemmas experienced by the pioneers in Eretz Israel. Not surprisingly, the audience was impressed by this realistic representation of life in Mandatory Palestine, and, when Tkumah performed the play in Santa Maria al Bagno, a Jewish DP ironically commented to Aldouby that "if the work in Eretz Israel [was] so hard, this [play was] **excellent** propaganda for emigrating to Brazil."[117] Indeed, Aldouby's final goal was to produce mentally and physically

[116] Aldouby referred to the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the large-scale Jewish settlement established in 1921 In the Jezreel Valley. Letter to the Shlichim updates, 11 December 1946, File 329, ZAPA, [Hebrew].

[117] Personal journal 1946-1947, 29 December 1946 [Hebrew], File 293, ZAPA, [Hebrew, Bold character is used in the original document].

prepared candidates for aliyah, avoiding the Utopian image of the "Promised Land."

Hence, Aldouby envisaged theater as a form of art that should evoke the past as a way to pave the road to the future. Through the preparation and performances of the play, Aldouby aimed to explore collective roots and establish what he called "landmarks," namely offering to the Jewish DPs new elements of belonging which revolved around Eretz Israel. Based on multiple dimensions of dialogue, the stage transforms itself not only into an aesthetic performance, but also into a space of ideological debate. Aldouby's private archives allowed us to explore the mission of one of the He-Halutz emissaries, who operated among the Jewish DPs in post-war Italy, shedding new light on educational training toward aliyah. Even if Aldouby's mission cannot be considered representative of the work of the entire He-Halutz, his political and educational vision have certainly enabled us to understand the multiple impacts of an overlooked experience of Jewish DPs after the Holocaust: their approach to performative arts, and in particular theater.

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Keywords: Holocaust, Theatre, Displaced Persons (DPs), Zionism, Italy, Hachsharah

How to quote this article:
Achinoam Aldouby, Michal Peles-Almagor, and Chiara Renzo, "Theater in Jewish DPs Camps in Italy: A Stage for Political and Ideological Debate on *Aliyah*, Zionism and Jewish Identity," in "Training for *Aliyah*: Young Jews in *Hachsharot* across Europe between the 1930s and late 1940s," eds. Verena Buser and Chiara Renzo, *Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History. Journal of the Fondazione CDEC* 21, no. 1 (2022), DOI: 10.48248/issn.2037-741X/13298

"As to my emotional anguish, there are days when I feel endlessly miserable": *Hachsharot* in Early Postwar Romania and the Limits of Belonging

by *Julie Dawson*

Abstract

This paper looks at the hachsharah *activities of Zionist organizations in early post-war Romania, examining the context and motivation of participants. Whereas the* hachsharot *in central Europe have been recognized as spaces of empowerment and agency for displaced persons, the contrasting Romanian war-time experience and divergent social structures called these very features into question in the Romanian context. Following a macrohistorical basic outline, a microhistorical approach is taken to probe the experience of one individual through a set of recently found diaries. Here the limits of Zionist propaganda and community-building work and the ramifications of failing to address the psychological and physical needs of Holocaust survivors are explored: despite apparent inclusion in a cohesive and sympathetic group, the diary author experiences alienation and marginalization within her own ranks.*

Conclusion

Introduction

... and next to me, they were
lying there, the others, who
were like me, the others, who
were different from me and
just the same, the cousins;
[...] and they did not love me
and I did not love them...[1]

On November 7th, 1948, Blanka Lebzelter, a young woman and survivor of the Transnistrian Holocaust, picked up her pencil and recorded the following words in a simple schoolgirl's notebook, describing her first month on a *hachsharah* (Zionist training camp for manual labor) in the small Romanian market town of Piatra Neamț, situated on the eastern slopes of the Carpathian mountains. She wrote:

> Today is one month since I have been here. A very difficult month full of difficult labor, to which I am unaccustomed, physical and emotional anguish. I do not know how it can continue because it is only getting colder and the draft in the factory is constantly getting stronger. There are wide open doors on both sides and a strong, cold draft blows right through me as well as the other workers, men and women. The past days I did not work with casket lids[2] anymore, but rather had to do other work like

[1] Paul Celan, "Conversation in the Mountains," in *Selected Poems and Prose of Paul Celan*, trans. by John Felstiner (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), 399.

[2] German: *Küstendeckel*. It is not clear what exactly the hachsharah members built at this wood factory. *Küste* may refer to an antiquated or dialect form of *Kiste*, which could mean an unspecific wooden box or indicate a casket or coffin. There was a significant Jewish community (not

> carrying planks. Taking planks from a machine and sorting them, and so forth. All things for the constitution of a strong peasant and not for a weak creature like me. The factory is a hell, it is destroying me. At the moment I see no chance of escape, on the contrary we are constantly being told that the "foresta" factory is the foundation of our existence. There is a group of other *haverim*[3] working in a different factory, doing work that is much easier and in warmth. Why do I have to sacrifice myself, why do I always have only misfortune? As to my emotional anguish, there are days when I feel endlessly miserable.[4]

Lebzelter went on to describe a recent Friday evening experience during which several of her fellow hachsharah comrades refused to make space for her at the communal Sabbath table, after which she retreated to her bed and wept. The *hachsharot* established by and for Displaced Persons (DPs) in Germany, Austria,

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devastated during the war) in Piatra Neamţ, where according to local legend, the Baal Shem Tov, founder of Hassidism, prayed in his later years. Jews were very active in the lumber industry throughout the heavily forested Carpathian mountains, especially in the neighboring former Habsburg regions of Maramureș and Bukovina and it is thus conceivable that the hachsharah members worked at a Jewish-owned or operated factory constructing wooden coffins for regional needs (according to Jewish ritual, burial is to take place in simple and unadorned wooden coffins). In my past work with Romanian Jewish community archives, I came across anecdotal documents indicating that hachsharah work sometimes took place on the grounds of Jewish-owned farms or factories. Archival visits which would have substantiated this theory and potentially resolved the matter of what exactly the hachsharah constructed, were not possible at the time of research as a result of the 2020-2021 covid pandemic. My thanks go to German Studies professor Dr. Astrid Lembke for assistance with the German *Küste*. I cannot speculate on whether working daily with symbols of the grave would have been an additional psychological strain on a survivor such as Lebzelter, who had recently witnessed the violent and traumatic deaths of countless individuals, intimates and strangers, buried lacking coffins and ritual rites. In her diaries, she does not comment on the work besides the physical strain.

[3] Hebrew: friends. The word *haver* or *havera* for "friend" was, however, also used in Yiddish as well as by the German-speaking population (including non-Jews) across the Austro-Hungarian empire, at least within urban areas (it is still commonly understood and used in today's Vienna). In the diaries Lebzelter adopted the vocabulary used by the leaders of the Zionist organization for members and thus she employs it consciously and exclusively to describe her colleagues at the hachsharah or within the organization; in other words in this context it means "fellow members" and does not necessarily denote personal friendship.

[4] Blanka Lebzelter's Diary, "Piatra Neamţ, 7 November 1948, Sontag," Blanca Lebzelter Collection, AR 25437, box 1, folder 2, Leo Baeck Institute, New York City. Unless otherwise noted, translations from German and Romanian from the diaries and other sources are my own.

and Italy following World War II have been lauded as locations of social and physical rehabilitation and training, where participants were able to positively assert themselves and their will, to mark out lives contrasting not only with those of the concentration camps, but also the DP camps.[5] What was the Romanian hachsharah context and what were this young woman's personal circumstances which gave way to an experience of such drastic contrast, one of social isolation, marginalization, and physical strain onerous for a Holocaust survivor, who had remained impoverished and undernourished since her release three years earlier, in 1944?

In this article, I will sketch the landscape of Romanian Zionist organizations and hachsharot in the early post-war period, examining the context of and motivation for participation, until 1949 when they were formally and terminally shut down by the communist regime. Following a basic macrohistorical outline using, among other sources, archival material held by the archives of the Securitate (the communist secret police) and an extant 1947 report by one of the Zionist organizations themselves, I take a microhistorical approach, probing the experience of one individual through the diaries quoted above.

Whereas the hachsharot in central Europe have been recognized as spaces of empowerment and agency for displaced persons, the contrasting Romanian war-time experience, precarious political post-war reality, and divergent social structures called these very features into question in the Romanian context. My particular aim in this paper is to peer beyond the numbers and place names and draw attention to the individual experience of one hachsharah participant. Beyond brief mentions in memoirs or oral histories, we know remarkably little about daily

[5] There is not space to go into a comprehensive overview of literature on hachsharot farther west, which have in general been far more extensively researched than those to the east, nor to compare and contrast experiences with those in Romania. See for example, Avinoam Patt, *Finding Home and Homeland: Jewish Youth and Zionism in the Aftermath of the Holocaust* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2009); Arturo Marzano, "Relief and Rehabilitation of Jewish DPs after the Shoah: The Hachsharot in Italy (1945-48)," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 18, no. 3 (2019): 314-329; Judith Tydor Baumel, *Kibbutz Buchenwald: Survivors and Pioneers* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997). In general, the experience of participants, at least as reported in these studies, was positive: they constructed surrogate families, fashioned "homes," found relief in the social environment and training opportunities.

life and individual experience on the Romanian hachsharot.[6] Lebzelter's humanizing voice provides a stark contrast to the bureaucratic information available in the archives, facilitating an intimate portrait of a hachsharah and one of its troubled members. The structure of the paper is as follows: after introducing the diary writer, her works, and my analytic lens, I move to a description of the Jewish position in post-war Romania, give a brief overview of Romanian Zionist activity and outline additional "outsider" (Securitate reports) and "insider" (Zionist organization report) sources mentioned above, before turning to Lebzelter's impressions of her own experience.

Blanka Lebzelter and her Writings

Since I reference the diaries throughout the present paper, a bit of brief background on Blanka Lebzelter, her diaries, and my methodology is required.[7] The diaries were discovered in 2009 by volunteers cleaning up the document-littered women's balcony of a shuttered synagogue in a small Transylvanian town.[8]

[6] One exception is Ruth Glasberg-Gold's memoir in which she wrote several pages about her experience on a Romanian hachsharah in 1946. Beyond the significant difference in form of a diary versus memoir, her social circumstances differed from Lebzelter considerably: Glasberg-Gold was an orphan and five to ten years younger than Lebzelter. Despite this, some of her impressions and experience overlap with Lebzelter. I will highlight these differences and consistencies in my text above. For Glasberg-Gold's hachsharah experience, see the chapter "From Communism to Zionism" in *Ruth's Journey: A Survivor's Memoir* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997), 154-161. Oral histories sometimes briefly mention hachsharah experiences, but the focus tends to be on the war-time period.

[7] Four diaries, three letters written to deceased loved ones, her Transnistrian identity cards and one letter to a cousin were found. The letters to the deceased provide biographical details without which many key events of her life would have been impossible to reconstruct.

[8] I discovered the diaries and associated papers in the Mediaș synagogue in 2009. They are now held at the Leo Baeck Institute: Blanka Lebzelter Collection AR 25437, Leo Baeck Institute Archives, New York City.

Fig. 1. One of the diaries and other assorted archival material in the women's balcony of the Mediaș synagogue. Photo Credit: Michael Nork, 2009.

Containing over 800 entries, they stretch from 1948-1961 and record the post-war life of grief and limited triumph of a young survivor of the Transnistrian Holocaust, Blanka Lebzelter. The diaries testify to the quotidian struggles impoverished survivors faced in the aftermath of devastation and are a tremendous tool to researchers, providing multi-faceted entry-points for examining the experience of Jewish survivors in Romania after the war as well as for analyzing manifestations of trauma in everyday life.

In his essay "The Diary between Literature and History: A Historian's Critical Response," historian Jochen Hellbeck argues that "the diary brings the researcher closer to the most interesting though ultimately elusive threshold separating text and life, literature and history."[9] Working from this concept of diaries at the confluence of literature and history, my larger research project employs interdisciplinary methods, grounded in biography and microhistorical approaches, to analyze and contextualize Lebzelter's writings and life on two intertwined planes: as a singular testimony representing survivor narratives that have been little probed and as a source allowing hitherto unexplored insights into

[9] Jochen Hellbeck, "The Diary between Literature and History: A Historian's Critical Response," *The Russian Review* 63, no. 4 (2004): 628-629.

social and cultural history considerations of post-war Romania.[10] I pair the close analysis of the diary's text with an examination of archival documents from institutes which brushed against, collided with, or were embedded in the realities of Lebzelter's day-to-day life, attempting to reconstruct social, cultural, and political contours which characterized her environment.[11] From a theoretical standpoint I position myself within the framework of scholars of women's history who have worked to "[unearth] heretofore unknown women and [come] to grips with how and why the "smallness" of their work or their worlds illuminates dimensions of the past."[12]

For the purpose of the present article, I will provide a basic sketch of Lebzelter's life in order to contextualize where she was, geographically and emotionally, in 1948-1949, the high point of hachsharah activity in Romania and the years during which she participated in one. Blanka Lebzelter was born near or in Czernowitz in the early/mid-1920s, thus during the hachsharah period in question, she was probably in her mid/late twenties.[13] Her father, Josef Lebzelter, was a civil servant

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[10] For an overview of the diaries as a source and my analytical lens(es), see Julie Dawson," 'What meaning can the keeping of a diary have for a person like me': Spaces of Survivor Agency under Postwar Oppression," in *European Holocaust Studies, Vol. 3*: *Places, Spaces and Voids in the Holocaust,* eds. Natalia Aleksiun and Hana Kubátová (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2021), 299-311. Dr. Gaëlle Fisher also drew on the diaries in her article "Between Liberation and Emigration: Jews from Bukovina in Romania after the Second World War," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 62 (2017): 115-132.

[11] On the need to employ "intertextual analysis" simultaneously to studying the text itself, not least due to what Christa Hämmerle describes as "strategies of silence, insinuation and periphrasis chosen by the author" and which point to the "particular 'vulnerability' of a private diary" see Christa Hämmerle, "Diaries," in *Reading Primary Sources: The Interpretation of Texts from Nineteenth and Twentieth Century History,* eds. Miriam Dobson and Benjamin Ziemann (Oxon: Routledge, 2009), 151.

[12] Antoinette Burton, "Foreword: 'Small Stories' and the Promise of New Narratives," in *Contesting Archives: Finding Women in the Sources,* eds. Nupur Chaudhuri, Sherry J. Katz, and Mary Elizabeth Perry (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), viii.

[13] Lebzelter's birth year remains a mystery as I have not been able to locate her birth record. Her Transnistria identity cards list her age as twenty-two in 1942. She herself refers to her "twenty years of life" when recalling incidents of May 1941, when she became engaged (see "Lieber Walter," Blanca Lebzelter Collection, AR 25437, box 1, folder 1, Leo Baeck Institute, New York City). However, the birth book for her hometown of Waschkoutz records three entries for her parents, all for boys: Bruno born in July 1918; Maximilian born in February 1921 (he must have died young, Blanka refers to Bruno as her "only brother"); an unnamed boy born in September 1922 who died within a few days, prior to the circumcision and ritual name-giving. Blanka is not listed in this book, which contains births to 1928. Her birthday, noted in her diary, is February 22, meaning she

during the Austro-Hungarian empire period, fulfilling official clerical duties in several Bukovina villages and towns. Her mother, Anna, grew up in Czernowitz, where her family overlapped with the social circles of Paul Antschel, later Celan: Lebzelter's first cousin, Gustav Chomed, was close boyhood friends with Antschel and in post-war correspondence Celan and Chomed wrote nostalgically of Chomed's home in the Töpfergasse—the home of Lebzelter's aunt, uncle, cousins, and grandparents.[14] The Lebzelter family were entrenched German-speaking Central European Jews; her older brother completed his degree in architecture at the University of Prague shortly before the war, her fiancé studied medicine there.[15] Her father, most recently secretary of the Waschkoutz town hall, was in his sixties at the start of the war, living in quiet retirement in a home with a garden full of fruit trees, in a small riverside town, a short train ride from Czernowitz.

When the war broke out Lebzelter was probably nineteen or twenty and well-educated, speaking besides her German mother tongue, Romanian, Russian, and English; most likely she understood Yiddish and Ukrainian.[16] She had a deep

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could feasibly have been born in 1920, if her mother afterwards became pregnant again quickly, unusual but not impossible (Maximilian was born in Feb. 1921) or she was born in 1924 (the third baby was born and died in Sept. 1922, so she cannot have been born in 1923). It seems implausible she could have passed for twenty-two years old if she was much younger than eighteen in 1942, which would put her birth year as 1924 and her age as seventeen in 1941. This seems young to become engaged—which she did shortly before the pogrom and deportation (1941)—in light of her family's educated background, so the birthyear of 1920 appears most likely. Regarding the missing birth record, she may have been born in Czernowitz, her mother's hometown, 40 km and a direct train ride away, though she is also not recorded in these birth books. She may have been born in a nearby town or village, as her father appears to have moved several times due to employment during this period (Bruno's birth place is recorded as Zamostia, a village less than 10 km from Waschkoutz). Or, the parents may have simply neglected to register her birth with the authorities for a variety of reasons. Jewish Birth Records for Waschkoutz am Cheremosch 1918-1928, record group 1245, series 1, files 932, Chernivtsi State Archive, Ukraine.

[14] Paul Celan and Gustav Chomed, *»Ich brauche Deine Briefe«,* eds. Barbara Wiedemann and Jürgen Köchel (Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag: 2010).

[15] The fact that Lebzelter's brother and fiancé studied in Prague can probably be attributed to the antisemitic numerus clausus laws put in place in interwar Romania rather than to an affinity for intellectual centers of the former empire, though Prague may have been high on their list as a result of its German-speaking tradition and common imperial cultural history. Many Bukovina Jews who came of age in late interwar Romania were forced to seek places of study outside of Romania.

[16] Except for English, the other languages were not unusual for the educated Jewish class of Bukovina. Regarding English, see Lebzelter's Diary, "2 July 1948," on cancelling her English lessons. It seems she writes to her relatives in the USA in English (her mother notably does not write the letters, even when Lebzelter is away on hachsharah) and she speaks English with visiting emissaries

appreciation for theater and the arts, a distinct distaste for manual labor and was deeply ashamed of depending on charity. In her writings, she gives no indication that Zionism ever played a noticeable part in her family's life prior to the war.[17]
In the summer of 1941 after the Barbarossa operation began, the Romanian army invaded northern Bukovina, which had been occupied by the Soviet Union the previous year. During the first few weeks of July 1941, pogroms were carried out in countless villages in the region, perpetrators included Romanian soldiers, Ukrainian or Romanian peasants, as well as a German Einsatz troop. In Lebzelter's home of Waschkoutz the Jews were pulled from their houses and gathered at the gendarmerie. A group of prominent men was selected for execution, marched to a low hillside outside the town and shot. Among these were Lebzelter's father and brother, Josef and Bruno; her fiancé was similarly murdered, in a different location.[18] Lebzelter and her mother, Anna, were later deported to Transnistria, where they spent three years in the ghetto of Moghilev-Podolsky.

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during a communist youth festival. She is responsible for the American, British, and Soviet films at her cinema job, it appears this responsibility is linked to understanding the language, see Lebzelter's Diary, "28 February 1948" and "1 April 1948." She also seeks employment at the Russian-Romanian publishing house, Cartea Rusă, noting "that would be something for me," Lebzelter's Diary, "19 September 1949." Even if German was the preferred language in the home, Yiddish was commonly understood by Jewish Bukovinas and the family was most likely one generation, if that, from speaking Yiddish at home. She only references the language once explicitly, in a sentimental remark about a radio broadcast of Yiddish songs in the 1950s. In multilingual Bukovina and especially in the villages and towns of the countryside where she grew up, at least a general understanding of Ukrainian was commonplace.

[17] In fact, the social circle of her first cousin, Gustav Chomed, (b. 1920, thus the same age), which included Paul Celan, explicitly refused to associate with Zionist youth movements, supporting instead the Soviet cause. Gustav Chomed left Czernowitz for the Soviet Union in summer of 1941 when the Red Army retreated. Edith Silbermann, *Czernowitz – Stadt der Dichter. Geschichte einer jüdischen Familie aus der Bukowina (1900-1948)*, ed. Amy-Diana Colin (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2015), 351; for details on the non-Zionist left-leaning activities of this youth circle, see Silbermann, *Czernowitz*, 93-98.

[18] Lebzelter describes these events in two letters to her murdered brother and fiancé, respectively: "Mein Bruder "and "Lieber Walter," 1955, Blanca Lebzelter Collection, AR 25437, box 1, folder 1, Leo Baeck Institute, New York City. Lebzelter does not specify who carried out the executions, though she does state that a Romanian major arrived and halted the bloodshed ("Lieber Walter"). Her words are corroborated in a slender volume published in 1945, which contains what seem to be (uncited) personal testimonies: Marius Mircu, *Pogromurile din Bucovina și Dorohoi* (Bucharest: Editura Glob, 1945), 49. Lebzelter's father and brother are mentioned by name therein. Today a rudimentarily hand-carved stone in Yiddish, dated 1946, still stands in a ring of trees in a

Upon their release in 1944 they returned initially to Czernowitz. Regarding this homecoming Lebzelter wrote "the hour arrived where we saw appear in the distance the towers of the Czernowitz archbishop's residence. I gazed, spellbound, upon these towers and listened inside for an echo of joy. But there was nothing of the kind. I sensed only my raw, sore heart and worries about the future."[19] She went on to explain the motives for their subsequent departure from Czernowitz: "we felt poorly in the old home, upon the ruins of our lives, plagued day and night by the most horrid memories and amongst those who were not innocent in our tragedy." The two women left, making their way eventually to the Black Sea port town of Constanța. Here the diaries begin, in January of 1948 and until 1961, when she finally received her longed-for exit visa, Lebzelter recorded more than 800 entries, detailing the humiliations and minor triumphs of daily life under the communist regime, her mother's eventual death from tuberculosis in 1952, and always a penetrating grief.

When Lebzelter left in 1961, she passed the diaries to her cousin, Babette Chomed (Gustav's sister) who had settled after the war in the small southern Transylvanian town of Mediaș. The last recorded words are

> I am very exhausted. The moment approaches to leave the old home and seek a new one. What will I find? One is not allowed to bring diaries, I could not bring myself to destroy them. I am entrusting them to someone for safekeeping. Will they ever find their way back to me?[20]

This paper focuses on an early chapter of Lebzelter's postwar life, one which lasted little more than a year: her membership in a Zionist organization and participation in a hachsharah. In the context of the diaries' span this "Zionist period" is brief, yet the year was one of tumult and fevered emotion as she sought to overcome various fears and hesitancies, deriving from the traumatic experiences of the Holocaust and nervous anticipation, believing herself to be on the eve of "beginning anew."

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small wood outside of Waschkoutz, the site of the executions, with the names of the murdered men, including Josef and Bruno Lebzelter.

[19] Blanca Lebzelter, "Mein Bruder," April 1955, Blanka Lebzelter Collection, LBI Archives.

[20] Lebzelter's Diary, "26 April 1961."

The Post-War Stage

The Jewish population in post-war Romania was unlike any other in Europe. Approximately half of the Jewish population had survived the war, making it second only to the Soviet Union in size. Numbering between 350,000-400,000, this group was fundamentally diverse, not only in their pre-war background, linguistic, and cultural affiliations, but also, and of great significance, their war-time fate.[21]

Some of those from northern Transylvania, the few survivors of Auschwitz and other Nazi camps, returned to their Transylvanian homes. Not infrequently, they returned initially, perhaps to seek for family and friends, but then moved elsewhere. Many remained, at least for a time, within the country.[22] Survivors of the Romanian-run Transnistrian camps and ghettos, generally from Bukovina or the interwar territory of Bessarabia, began returning in 1944 and in 1946 many thousands crossed from northern Bukovina, now part of the U.S.S.R., into Romania. Meanwhile, the Jewish populations of Wallachia, southern Transylvania and other southern regions had survived relatively unscathed, though antisemitic legislation, regional excesses, and killings traumatized certain areas more than others.[23] Almost certainly everyone had somewhere lost relatives or friends, but personal experiences varied dramatically. This diverse group of survivors claimed mother tongues of Romanian, Hungarian, German, Yiddish, and Russian; there were moreover, refugees from other parts of Europe in transit,

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[21] From 1946-1948 population estimates range between 372,000-428,000 according to various sources in Table 1, Hildrun Glass, *Minderheit zwischen zwei Diktaturen: Zur Geschichte der Juden in Rumänien 1944-1949* (München: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2002), 311. A 1949 Securitate report gives the population as 350,000. Fond documentar Constanța, CNSAS D002873, vol. 4, Consiliul Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității, Bucharest, Romania.

[22] See "Registers I and II: Jews from Sighet who returned from work detachments and deportation camps," Sighetu Marmației Jewish Community Collection, Box R1, Archives of the Sighetu Marmației Jewish Community, Sighetu Marmației, Romania. Within a relatively short period, many returned deportees moved away from Sighet, but stayed within Romania (most eventually did emigrate).

[23] Particularly brutal killings took place in Bucharest and Iași. On Iași see Radu Ioanid, *The Holocaust in Romania: The Destruction of the Jews and Gypsies under the Antonescu Regime, 1940-1944* (Chicago: Ivan Dee, 2002), 63-90 and on Bucharest, Ibid., 57-60.

drawn to the Black Sea port where there was always the hope—and sometimes the genuine possibility—that a ship would leave for Palestine.

The years immediately after the war were chaotic and little has been written about the reestablishment of the Jewish community.[24] According to contemporary testimonies, such as rabbi Alexander Safran's memoirs, the early years were marked by pernicious and venomous infighting, caused by clashing ideologies regarding the future of Jewish life after the Shoah and base power struggles.[25] The leadership was taxed primarily with attempting to provide welfare and relief to the destitute and broken survivors of Transnistria and the German camps. Refugees from both, though especially the former, streamed into virtually all intact communities country-wide. These local communities established their own various methods and means for providing for the survivors, relying on donations and assistance from within the local community as well as aid from international organizations, such as the Joint Distribution Committee.[26]

Despite assistance, most survivors were, as a group, in shambles. Thousands were displaced, suffering from illness, malnourishment, grief, dispossession, trauma, and dire poverty.[27] For many, if not most of the young, one idea consumed their thoughts—to leave Romania and begin anew elsewhere. Those with the physical,

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[24] A notable exception is Glass, *Minderheit zwischen zwei Diktaturen*. The volume deals primarily with the elites and leadership of the community. See also Jean Ancel, "She'erit Hapletah in Romania during the Transition Period to a Communist Regime August 1944-December 1947," in *She'erit Hapletah, 1944-1948: Rehabilitation and Political Struggle,* eds. Yisrael Gutman and Avital Saf (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1990), 143-167. Ancel provides a useful synthesis of this precarious period, while also focusing primarily on community leadership.

[25] Alexandre Safran, *Resisting the Storm: Memoirs, Romania 1940-1947* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1987), especially chapter 10 "Conflicts and Rivalries," 189-206.

[26] Many post-war community archives contain lists of those who received welfare and notes on whether aid was provided by outside organizations. See, for example, "Welfare lists. 1946," Sighetu Marmației Jewish Community Collection, Box R2, Archives of the Sighetu Marmației Jewish Community; Sighetu Marmației, Romania or "Chart of individuals receiving assistance (1946)," Mediaș Jewish Community Collection, box SA44, folder F1, Archives of the Mediaș Jewish Community, Mediaș, Romania. Lebzelter explicitly mentions applying for medical assistance for her mother through the Joint, Lebzelter's Diary, "4 February 1949." Ancel argues that despite certain fundamental missteps, the Joint was responsible for saving "over half of Romania's Jews from starvation and possible death" during the initial years after the war. Ancel, "She'erit Hapletah in Romania," 157.

[27] See Jean Ancel, " 'The New Jewish Invasion' – The Return of Survivors from Transnistria," in *The Jews are Coming Back: The Return of the Jews to their Countries of Origin after WW II* (Jerusalem: Berghahn Books and Yad Vashem, 2005), 231-256.

financial, or personal prowess—as well as a bout of good fortune—fled however they could, as soon as they could. These included the later well-known Bukovina authors Aharon Appelfeld, Edgar Hilsenrath, and Paul Celan, unattached young men at the time, all of whom managed to get out by 1947 at the latest.[28] Young and unattached young women also left, if they found the means.[29] However, notwithstanding the isolated tales of those who later published memoirs, the vast majority of survivors remained within the country with neither the physical, financial, nor legal means to depart. This applied in particular to the most vulnerable, to whom Lebzelter and her mother, as impoverished and physically frail female survivors lacking male protectors, must be counted. Lebzelter was, moreover, tasked with the responsibility of caring for her ill mother, a grave concern of which she was constantly aware.

Zionist Organizations in Romania

Providing a desperate outlet for the postwar energies, frustrations, and aspirations of the youth and young people were numerous Zionist organizations active in

[28] In fact, motives for leaving prior to the 1948 communist assumption of power deserve more research. The description of Bucharest from 1945-1947 in Solomon Petre's memoir *Paul Celan: The Romanian Dimension,* trans. Emanuela Tegla (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2019) records an artistically, intellectually, and socially vibrant setting for young Jews in Bucharest, complicating the (standard) narrative of Jews desperate to get out. Lebzelter notes in 1948 that she was only just beginning to mull emigration, perhaps the initial years after the war were experienced with a sense of euphoria and hope by some and skepticism arrived later. In his oral history interview Norbert Nadler (1922-2017), a survivor of the same ghetto as Lebzelter, suggests that immediately after the war there was a collective feeling of guilt amongst the Romanians and that it took "three to four years [for them] to realize that they are still the masters [...] and then [to] start being antisemit[ic]." Norbert Nadler, HVT 0536, Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, Yale University, New Haven, CT.

[29] Testimonies from orphans or the very young (under twenty) indicate that this social group was eager to leave as quickly as possible. In a text "Leaving Home," written in 1949 shortly after arriving in Israel, Chana Koffler recounts her departure in 1947 at the age of 16 or 17 (the text is in the private collection of Howard Wiesenthal). Also a survivor of Transnistria, she left her parents and sisters behind in Romania because she felt she was a financial burden to them and was desperate to begin learning or acquiring a skill, having had her schooling interrupted consistently since the age of ten. Likewise, Ruth Glasberg-Gold, an orphan, left in 1946 with a group of other young people, see Glasberg-Gold, *Ruth's Journey*, 161.

every part of the country. Very little has been written about the activities and operations of Zionist organizations in Romania, at any point in time.[30] During the interwar period activity and participation differed from region to region depending on the varied socio-economic circumstances and degree of assimilation of the Jewish population in former Habsburg territories versus the Russian and Old Kingdom regions.[31] Memoirs by Bukovina Jews often recall involvement in

[30] There are two articles on activities during the World War II period, these draw primarily on anecdotal accounts and documents available in Israeli archives. See Arie Steinberg, "Underground Activity of the Halutz Youth Movements in Romania," in *Zionist Youth Movements during the Shoah*, eds. Asher Cohen and Yehoyakim Cochavi (New York: Peter Land, 1995), 309-320 and Shmuel Ben-Zion, "Youth Movements in Romania 1937-1942," in Ibid., 301-308. For a chapter on the reconstruction of organizations in the post-war period, see Natalia Lazăr, "Organizațiile sioniste din România după 23 August 1944: Reconstrucție și dizolvare," in *Istorie și Memorie Evreiască*, eds. Anca Ciuciu and Camelia Crăciun (Bucharest: Hasefer, 2011), 172-188 and several pages by Hary Kuller, "Sionismul în anii tranziției spre comunism – studiu de caz," in *Buletinul Centrului, Muzeului și Arhivei istorice a evreilor din România*, ed. Hary Kuller (Bucharest: C.S.I.E.R., 2008), 24-30. Glass writes a helpful overview on the issues of re-establishing structures and the internal ideological power struggles after the war: Glass, "Zionistische Organizationen," in *Minderheit zwischen zwei Diktaturen*, 34-42. She also comments on the "multitude" of the groups and their many splinterings, noting "especially in the area of youth work, new [organizations] were constantly being created, others united only to, not infrequently, break up into separate groups again a short time later." Indicative of the lack of overview in scholarship of the convoluted situation is her omission of Gordonia and Busselia, the organizations in which Lebzelter took part, in a list of groups (Busselia was the youth arm of Gordonia), Glass, *Minderheit zwischen zwei Diktaturen,* 39 (Gordonia is mentioned in the Lazăr chapter and Kuller cites both of them). One of the few sources dedicated to developments in a specific place is Hugo Gold's *Geschichte der Juden in der Bukowina*, which contains entries or chapters on the general history of the Zionist movement in Bukovina, specific histories of several Zionist fraternities (*Verbindung*), and the Hashomer Hazair movement: Hugo Gold, ed., *Geschichte der Juden in der Bukowina*, vol. 1 (Tel Aviv: Olamenu Press, 1958). One of the only memoirs devoting significant space to the Zionist movement and activities is Bernard Politzer, *Walachian years: Politico-cultural chronicle of a youth, 1940-1960* (Rehovot: Balaban Publishers, 2001). Regarding Romanian hachsharot specifically, nothing extensive has been written to my knowledge. My own research was hampered by the closure of archives and travel restrictions due to the 2020-2021 covid pandemic; the archival sources used here were accessed prior to the pandemic and unfortunately at this time it was not possible to augment the material with new sources (little to nothing of Romanian archival material is digitized). Other sources on the development of Zionist thought and ideology in Romania in general exist, but are not cited here for lack of space and relevance to the paper's specific context.

[31] For a summary of these differences, see Ezra Mendelsohn, *The Jews in East Central Europe between the Wars* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1983), 192-194. He describes the situation as "highly fragmented" (193). Unfortunately, there are no detailed studies on the number of and participation in Zionist organizations during the interwar period. Glass summarizes the

various Zionist groups, but there are no concrete figures and the evidence is anecdotal, often written by those who later successfully made *aliyah*, confirming a Zionist narrative, and of course, by those who survived the wartime atrocities.[32] Amongst the Romanian interwar regions, Bukovina and Bessarabia claimed the strongest aliyah-oriented Zionist movements, yet many personal reminiscences indicate that participation in Zionist groups amongst the youth was primarily a social enterprise, delineating identity in a multiethnic space, made more urgent by the Romanian antisemitism of the interwar years. [33] Czernowitzer Zvi Yavetz (1925-2013), later professor of ancient history in Tel Aviv, was little impressed with his first Zionist youth meeting in 1938, where the leaders spoke poor Hebrew and members seemed more interested in socializing rather than in any pragmatic preparations: "In our "ken" [literally "nest"] the good dancers were more appreciated than those who had mastered Hebrew grammar," [34] he recalled.

interwar situation in two sentences, providing further sources on the movements in individual regions. Glass, *Minderheit zwischen zwei Diktaturen*, 34.

[32] The two-volume tome, *Geschichte der Juden in der Bukowina* contains detailed information on the establishment, members, leaders, and activities of Zionist organizations in Czernowitz, but despite the many names and dates, it is difficult to ascertain what percentage of the Jewish population was actually involved in the reported activities. As noted by Gaëlle Fisher, the explicit Zionist dimension of the publication "served to inscribe the history of Bukovinian Jews in a decidedly Zionist tradition," with other experiences being underrepresented or not mentioned at all. Gaëlle Fisher, *Resettlers and Survivors: Bukovina and The Politics of Belonging in West Germany and Israel, 1945-1989* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2020), 141; Dr. Leon Arie Schmelzer, "Geschichte des Zionismus in der Bukowina," in *Geschichte der Juden in der Bukowina*, ed. Gold, 91-112. Certainly, Zionism had a strong following in Czernowitz but like all central and eastern European cities with significant Jewish populations, Czernowitz (and Bukovina) youth participated in the breadth of Jewish social-political movements, from far-left communism to rightwing Zionism. Prive Friedjung describes the leftist communist milieu in *'Wir wollten nur das Paradies auf Erden'. Die Erinnerungen einer jüdischen Kommunistin aus der Bukowina* (Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 1995). She links the left-wing political atmosphere amongst craftsmen specifically to Yiddish: "For me, Czernowitz means the symbiosis of Yiddishism and revolutionary thinking," (132). According to one biographer, poet Paul Celan explicitly rejected the "petite bourgeois Zionism of his [father]" and instead was active in the non-Zionist leftwing antifascist movement, see Israel Chalfen, *Paul Celan. Eine Biographie seiner Jugend* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1979), 60-64. References in memoirs or testimonies to participation in Zionist youth groups are too great to list, see for example Gaby Coldewey et al., eds., *Zwischen Pruth und Jordan: Lebenserinnerungen Czernowitzer Juden* (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2003).

[33] On Bessarabia and Bukovina as Zionist centers in relation to the rest of Romania, see Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe*, 193.

[34] Zvi Yavetz, *Erinnerungen an Czernowitz: Wo Menschen und Büchter lebten* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2008), 123. For more on Zionist organizations specifically, see also 70-73, 101-102 and 121-123.

Though the Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir movement was established after World War I by young people returning from Vienna (where they had fled during the war), there is little evidence that significant numbers of young people, even members of this highly ideological movement, in fact intended to emigrate to Palestine.[35] For the poor especially, aliyah and the costs associated with it, was completely out of reach. Yavetz' wrote that regardless of how well the poor teachers of Hebrew might have mastered the language, "in their opinion Zionism was only a solution for rich Jews, those who could afford to pay 1,000 pounds sterling for a certificate [...]. Poor Jews would have to (in an emergency) depend on the Red Army, this was the only way for Romanian Jews to save themselves from the Nazis."[36] His own family, some of whom were relatively earnest about the Zionist movement, quickly renounced any serious emigration intent after the fall of the particularly antisemitic Cuza regime in 1938.[37]

This situation of relative ambivalence towards Zionism changed dramatically after the war, as the Jewish population began to mobilize to leave en masse, and the key to departure was often believed to be held by Zionist organizations. In any case, the organizations asserted or encouraged such belief. Where pre-war there may have been various options for operating or integrating in Romanian society, not least within established Jewish circles, the realities of the war had convinced many that there was little place in contemporary Romanian society for a fulfilling Jewish life. Aliyah seemed a reasonable bet for "starting a new life" as Lebzelter and countless others wrote, whether one remained in Palestine long-term or not was beside the point, the desire to leave the space of the perpetrators was overpowering. [38]

Lebzelter herself writes in 1948 of joining a youth organization with departure in mind, emigrating to Palestine is framed as a novel idea, rather than one long harbored: "Since for a few weeks now I've been mulling over the idea of going to Palestine, I joined one of the local Zionist organizations last month," she writes.[39]

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[35] For details on the Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir movement in Bukovina see Jaakow Polesiuk-Padan, "Die Geschichte der ‚Haschomer Hazair' in der Bukowina," in *Geschichte der Juden in der Bukowina*, ed. Gold, 145-152. The first hachsharah was established in 1924.

[36] Yavetz, *Erinnerungen an Czernowitz, 176.*

[37] Ibid., 48-74.

[38] Lebzelter's Diary, "1 August 1948."

[39] Ibid., "28 January 1948."

Her ambivalence, whether on ideological grounds or other, is explicit: "I joined this movement because I have nothing to lose and not out of conviction. I wish my heart could be in it, but unfortunately this is not the case." [40] The participation of many may have been similarly motivated, in any case one contemporary report on the situation in Romania noted that the Transnistrian survivors wanted not to go to Palestine per se but simply to get out of Romania.[41] The Zionist organizations, especially those of the He-Halutz or pioneering movement, fomented for action, amongst the youth, the Jewish leadership, and political authorities. Gearing their activities towards the practical and the immediate, they established hachsharah centers across the country, placing trainees in both agricultural and factory work. It is not possible to reliably reconstruct membership numbers across the many organizations, some sources cite numbers as high as 100,000 in 1947, jumping to 200,000 in 1949, which would have been over half of the Jewish population nationwide.[42] The number of youth participating in hachsharah work in early 1949 is given as 7,000 in one report.[43] Precise numbers aside, it is certain that during these years thousands of Jewish young people were crisscrossing the country to live on communal collectives, training as farmers and factory workers and preparing for a new life. Two sources give us insight into the operations and expanse of Romanian Zionist organizations during the late 1940s: documents created and gathered by the Securitate and a report on a 1947 annual conference of the Gordonia and Busselia (youth arm of Gordonia) organizations.

[40] Ibid., "7 February 1948."

[41] According to Ancel, one operative assisting Romanian Jews to leave asserted regarding the impoverished Transnistrian survivors: "Those Jews are not going to The Land of Israel – they are running away from Romania." Ancel, " 'The New Jewish Invasion'," footnote 81, 255 and in a similar vein Ancel, "She'erit Hapletah in Romania," 160-161.

[42] Glass, *Minderheit zwischen zwei Diktaturen*, 39 and 42.

[43] Ibid., 42. Besides Glass' pages on Zionist organizations in general during this period there are no studies on these Romanian Zionist youth movements in the postwar years.

"The Jewish Problem"

The whirlwind of Zionist activity interested the Securitate greatly. The prevalent attitude of the Romanian state, despite any communist ideals, was to view the Jewish population as an inherently foreign element.[44] The Securitate files for the county of Constanța, where Lebzelter was living, contain over 1,500 pages on the Jewish community, most of which relate to Zionist activity and stem primarily from the years 1945-1949. Often labelled "The Jewish problem" or "the Zionist problem" these files contain a wide variety of material, from internal Securitate reports, some made in the mid-1950s, significantly after the heyday of Zionist activity, to hundreds of documents created by the organizations themselves and apparently seized—these include registration forms, minutes of meetings, and internal correspondence between organizations or branches.

The multitude of organizations operating apparently baffled secret police agents, as attested to by numerous hand-drawn charts, almost always with mark-outs and re-writes.

[44] For a brief overview of Jews as the "other," see Lucian Boia, *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness* (Budapest: Central Europea University Press, 2001), 170-174. For a longer read, see Andrei Oișteanu, *Inventing the Jew: Antisemitic Stereotypes in Romanian and Other Central East-European Cultures* (Lincoln, WI: University of Nebraska Press, 2009).

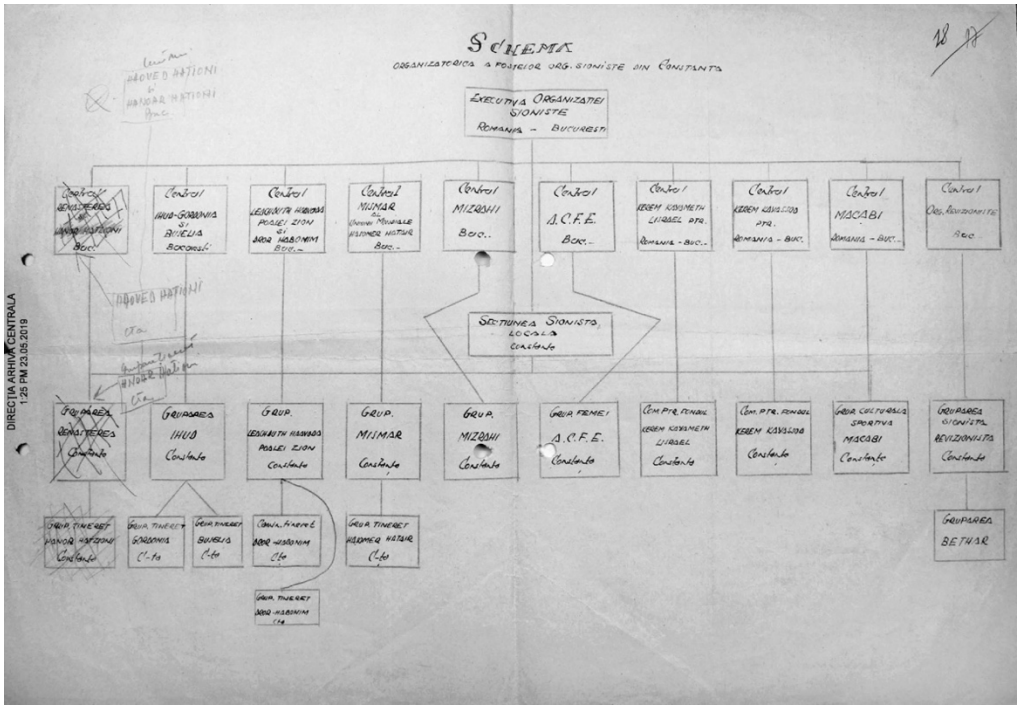

Fig. 2. Organization of former Zionist organizations in Constanta." Source: "Probleme Sioniste: Scheme şi Mat. Documentar," p. 21 (no date, 1950s), Fond documentar Constanța, CNSAS D002894, vol. 1, CNSAS, Bucharest

One item, a more concise Securitate report from 1949 is helpful for trying to understand some of the internal administration, though not everything in the report can be taken at face value. The report, entitled "The Jewish Problem" and stamped "top secret," is fifteen pages long and contains various statistics on the Jewish population (regional breakdowns, employment, professions) and an overview of the Zionist organizations and their operation.[45] It is clear the informant(s) or author(s) were privy to certain concrete facts and information, but other statements conflict significantly with alternate sources or emphasize a degree of suspect secrecy unlikely at the time.[46]

[45] "Problema Evreeasca," 1949; Fond documentar Constanța, CNSAS D002873, vol. 4, Consiliul Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității, Bucharest, Romania.

[46] For example, the 1949 report states that the largest Zionist organization, Ihud, counts 25,000 members (p. 3). Glass suggests that total Zionist membership totaled as much as 200,000 in 1949. It is difficult to say which source is (closer to being) correct. The report also suggests there are essentially no differences in what members of the organizations, acknowledged to range from far-left to far-right politically, are taught (p. 3) and asserts that all leaders take code names (not corroborated in other sources). Though certain facets of the Romanian Zionist movement

This report also lists Zionist organization branches—fifty in all—and hachsharot locations (nine). From other sources (see below), not least Lebzelter's own diary, we know this list of organization branches and hachsharot locations is far from complete. Still, mapping these locations provides a visual representation of the far-reaching spread of organizational activities.

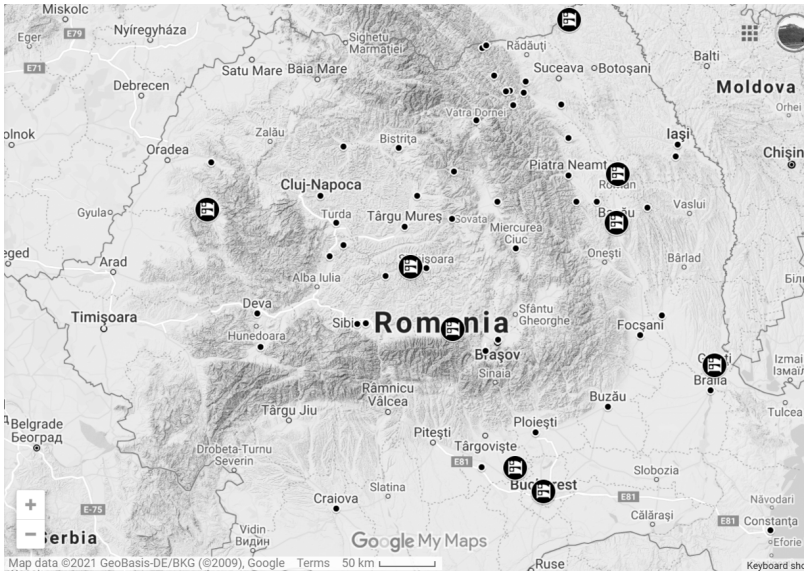

Fig. 3. Map of Zionist branches and hachsharot locations according to 1949 Securitate report. A dot (●) represents a branch location, a bunkbed , a hachsharah. "Problema Evreeasca," 1949, Fond documentar Constanța, CNSAS D002873, vol. 4, CNSAS, Bucharest. Map by Julie Dawson ©2021 GeoBasis-DE/BKG (©2009)

The 1947 Conference Report

The 1947 report by the Gordonia and Busselia organization provides an alternative view of the activities, focusing as it does on one of these organizations or, more properly, two sister organizations for youth.

involved espionage, it was hardly a secretive undertaking for the many thousands of members who met frequently in public and community spaces. "Problema Evreeasca," 1949, Fond documentar Constanța, CNSAS D002873, vol. 4, Consiliul Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității, Bucharest, Romania.

Fig. 4. Gordonia, Macabi Ha-zair, Busselia of Romania: The Proceedings of the Third Convention in the Year 5707 [ספר ועידה ג' תש"ז / גורדוניה, מכבי הצעיר, בוסליה ברומניה], National Library of Israel (Jerusalem).

The booklet, held by the National Library of Israel, is a 152-page report detailing the activities of the organizations and reprinting select speeches and lectures from the conference.[47] Though the cover is in Hebrew, the entire contents of the booklet are in Romanian and provide unparalleled insight into the activities and

[47] *Gordonia, Macabi Ha-zair, Busselia of Romania: The Proceedings of the Third Convention in the Year 5707* [ספר ועידה ג' תש"ז / גורדוניה, מכבי הצעיר, בוסליה ברומניה], 1947 (n.p., s.l.). Held by the National Library of Israel.

ideologies of the two organizations in the late 1940s. It is the only source of such comprehensive nature I have found thus far.

The contents include reprinted speeches from the three-day conference, historical overviews of the movements, and of notable interest for reconstructing the Romanian situation, reports on the history and location of individual Gordonia and Busselia branches and hachsharot locations.

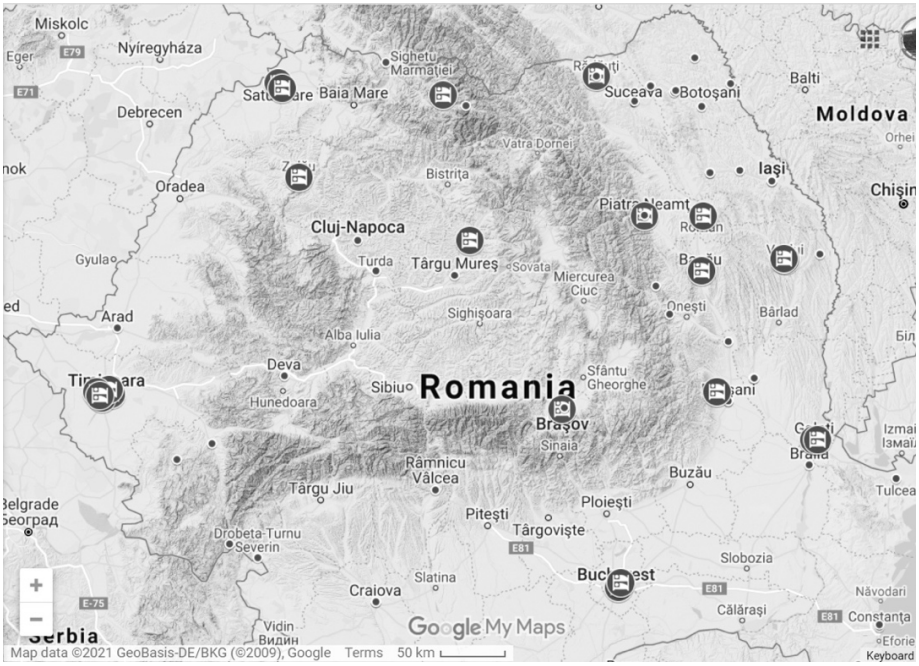

Fig. 5. Map of Busselia and Gordonia branches and hachsharot locations according to 1947 report. A dot (●) represents a branch location, a bunkbed , a hachsharah. Map by Julie Dawson, created using Google Maps, Map data ©2021 GeoBasis-DE/BKG (©2009).

A total of fifty-four branches and twenty-three hachsharot are listed, most of which do not overlap with the sites provided in the Securitate report.[48] The booklet also helps to distinguish the rapid expansion of the organization: at the time of publication, sometime after April 1947, there is not a branch in Constanța,

[48] I include in this number of hachsharot, the three sites mentioned by Lebzelter in her diary. These are not listed in the Gordonia/Busselia booklet, indicating they opened sometime after spring 1947. Indeed, the remarks on each location show that it was not uncommon for a location to operate, shut down (for a variety of reasons), only to open again or even relocate, with the same members, elsewhere. Despite these irregularities, the site lists provide a useful snapshot of this particular moment.

though one is planned. Lebzelter joins the Constanța branch in early 1948. Presumably additional branches opened in other cities and towns around the country in the course of 1948. Similarly, from the diary we know that Lebzelter's hachsharah was newly established and she writes of two others, one of which is not listed in the booklet. The process of establishing hachsharot must have continued apace throughout 1948: the locations cited here are for only one organization of many. From this we can conclude that indeed, the 1949 Securitate report citing only nine hachsharot countrywide, none of which overlap with the Busselia hachsharot, was in fact severely uninformed.

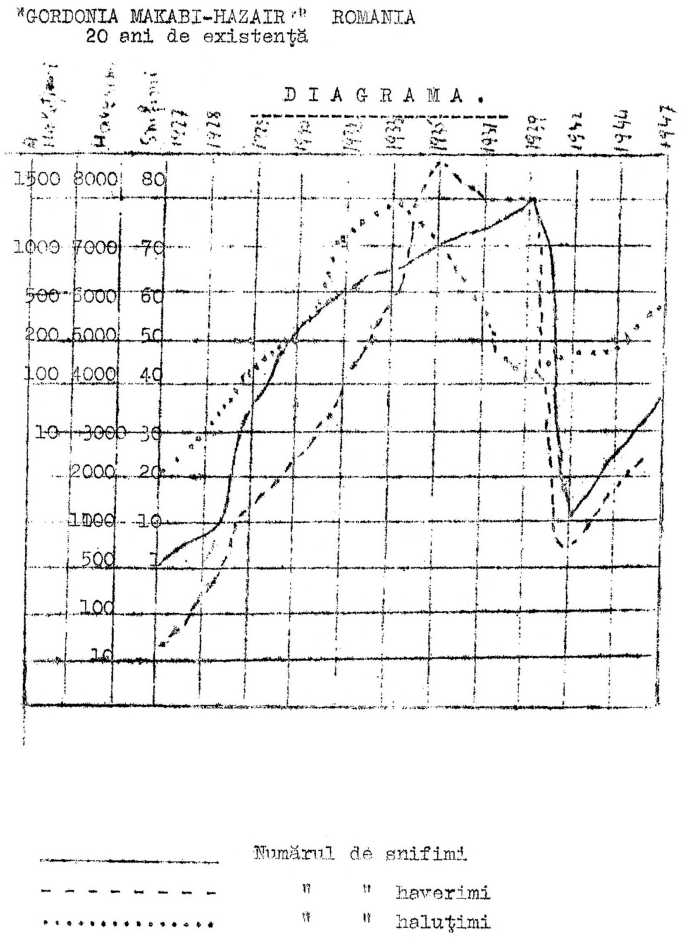

Fig. 6. Hand-drawn chart of Gordonia branches (*snifimi*), membership (*haverimi*), and pioneers (*haluțimi*). Gordonia, Macabi Ha-zair, Busselia of Romania: The Proceedings of the Third Convention in the Year 5707, National Library of Israel (Jerusalem).

Participation in *Hachsharot* in Romania: Lebzelter's Experience

Hachsharot in Germany and Italy were filled by displaced persons: camp survivors, the stateless or those who refused to return to their former state of citizenship. Participating was a choice, an act of agency and empowerment, to take part in a way of living that set itself up in opposition to camp life. According to descriptions of the Italian camps, it was in particular the daily rhythms of cooking your own food, living in and caring for your own lodgings, which appealed to camp survivors, desperate to leave behind anything reminiscent of life in the concentration camps.[49] In his book *Finding Home and Homeland: Jewish Youth and Zionism in the Aftermath of the Holocaust*, Avinoam Patt repeatedly refers to the physical and psychological benefits life on a hachsharah or kibbutz offered to survivors. The environment "could provide a sort of replacement family while offering its members shelter, security, and education."[50]

Such a situation was often a far cry from the Romanian setting, where the social and political landscape was drastically different. Despite the poverty, most of the Jewish population had some sort of home or shelter of their own (sometimes provided to refugees by the local community) and, unless they were orphans, people generally lived with surviving family members. Thus, participating in hachsharah was not a choice between (DP) camp-life and a life with increased comfort or freedom, indeed for some it had the opposite affect—diminished spheres of agency in an already fragile construct. For many, if not most, it meant leaving behind family members and a home and joining a group of strangers in a communal lifestyle with little privacy—a lifestyle partially reminiscent, for those who had survived Transnistria, of the war. Without a doubt, orphans or unattached youth saw the matter differently: After growing weary of being shuttled between relatives, Ruth Glasberg-Gold, an orphan whose parents died in Transnistria, decided that by joining a Zionist organization and participating in a hachsharah, she could achieve independence and cement a supportive social-structure, all while facilitating her departure from Romania.[51]

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[49] Marzano, "Relief and Rehabilitation of Jewish DPs after the Shoah," 320.

[50] Patt, *Finding Home and Homeland*, 89.

[51] Glasberg-Gold, *Ruth's Journey*, 157.

For Glasberg-Gold, participation came as a relief, a welcome escape from unpleasant relatives. For Lebzelter, however, participation meant unwilling separation from her mother, the sole survivor of her immediate family. Her mother was moreover ill, participation therefore meant consciously putting her mother's well-being in danger. And participation was, furthermore, not offered as a choice for those ideologically attracted. Instead, it was mandated as obligatory to be considered for aliyah. From her words, Lebzelter clearly felt coerced into participating in a venture to which she was little attracted ideologically and as a consequence of which, her mother's very life could be imperiled. She was cognizant of her complex circumstances and felt that they differed from those of other members, not all of whom had suffered deportation, illness, and the pressures of caring alone for an ill parent. She believed her situation merited special consideration and exemption.

In September 1948, the same day on which she wrote of nursing her mother who had lain two weeks in bed, she noted "Today I wrote a letter to the central branch and asked whether in my case hachsharah is absolutely necessary or whether an exception can be made."[52] She had written once before asking similarly, and received a "very unfriendly answer, a preachy sermon, the beloved slogan being that the organization is not an emigration office and without hachsharah aliyah is impossible."[53] Her second inquiry elicited the same response: "without hachsharah, there is no aliyah."[54] The cold answer from the head office left her in a familiar state—one of powerlessness vis-à-vis an authority claiming influence over her fate. And yet, the organizations did not hold the power to grant aliyah, as would become distressingly clear.

Daily Life on the Piatra Neamț *Hachsharah*

Despite her great unwillingness and concerns about leaving her mother alone, after twice turning down spots, Lebzelter finally accepted a hachsharah position offered in October 1948, believing herself to have no other choice if she desired to emigrate.

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[52] Lebzelter's Diary, "4 September 1948."

[53] Ibid., "13 August 1948."

[54] Ibid., "12 September 1948."

On Oct. 4th she wrote, "Today the hachsharah assignments came—to Piatra Neamț, in a new group. A group of 12 *haverim* will go, already this Wednesday evening or early Thursday."[55] Two days later, Wednesday evening she recorded:

> It is 6:30 in the evening. My things are piled on my bed. I need to pack them in the suitcase now. My heart is very heavy. I am leaving mother alone. In the past seven years, since she and I were left alone, this is the first time that I have left her. Tomorrow, god willing, we depart at 6:30 in the morning.[56]

She spent the next three months in Piatra Neamț, recording twenty entries describing her daily work, social interactions, worries about her mother and her own precarious health, and increasingly depressed spirits. Her group was the vanguard of a new hachsharah, which eventually counted six *plugot* (groups), numbering between thirty to fifty members each. They slept two to a bed; her blanket, brought from home, she wrapped beneath and then around her to sleep. There was no running water or place to wash. Her work for the first six weeks, until she fell too ill to continue, was in a wood factory or sawmill. The factory was a two kilometer walk from their lodging, they rose at 5:30 in the morning and she spent nine hours on her feet hammering nails into casket lids. Evenings were occupied with meetings and they went to sleep after midnight. I will cite one entry in full, written about two weeks after her arrival:

> A few words about our group. At the moment we are thirty-something haverim. Most are nice, young people. We have six rooms and a kitchen. I have already described my work, also noted that it is difficult and very strenuous for me. The thick dust and tremendous roar of the machines, the long way there, getting up early and going to bed late, all this is having a disastrous effect on me. At least, I have that feeling. Thank god there is food. I eat more than what I ate at home. I have already turned in the papers and photographs and they have been sent to Bucharest. They say if

[55] Ibid., "4 October 1948."
[56] Ibid., "6 October 1948."

> there is a big aliyah, then we will all go, if a little one, then we won't. There are *halutzim* here who have already been on hachsharah for a year. I haven't yet written a word about how I feel here. Unfortunately, I cannot say I feel good as that would be a lie. It is collective life here. I am friendly with all the haverim, especially with the more intelligent ones. But I have no real friend and no connection at all. I suffer from this lack of connection. Sometimes I feel very dejected about it. More than once I have cried because of it. And yet, despite this I do not regret for one minute that I came. This was the last chance and consequently the last chance for me to win a right to aliyah.[57]

The entry touches on the quintessential features of her experience: her struggles with her work tasks, the concrete link between hachsharah participation and promises of aliyah, and especially her difficulties connecting socially. Here and elsewhere her descriptions of the profound social disconnect she experiences within the group appear to stem from a mixture of her reserved personality, probably perceived in the collective context as aloofness, genuine feelings of superiority, and bitterness at her own hard fate—her *Schicksal*—as she calls it, which she feels that others were not made to suffer.

There is no way of knowing what percentage of the participants were survivors of Transnistria or other camps, but it does seem that Lebzelter, as opposed to the experience of hachsharah participants farther west, did not perceive in the other members a shared war-time experience. Glasberg-Gold also notes that she was one of only a few members who had survived a harrowing ordeal: "I was also one of the few with a grim past. I later learned that two other members of our group were also survivors of the camps, but we never spoke of it. We were too busy creating new lives, filling every minute with activities and dreams."[58]

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[57] Ibid., "25 October 1948."

[58] Glasberg-Gold, *Ruth's Journey*, 158. A Transnistrian survivor who made her way to Poland and with her mother joined a kibbutz there, also noted the unofficial injunction on discussing recent horrors. She recalled "No, they did not want to talk to us about it. Because we were very heartbroken. [...] They tried to make us happy or give us security, they did not speak to us about it. [...] I don't remember talking to anyone about my experiences." Pearl T., HVT 2639, Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, Yale University, New Haven, CT.

Unlike Glasberg-Gold, Lebzelter's social isolation grew and climaxed on the evening described at the start of this paper, when two members refused to make room for her at the Sabbath table. The incident acted as a trauma trigger, alone in her room she was unable to cease weeping: "I wept without stopping for over two hours, it had seized me and did not let go."[59] Her breakdown drew the attention of the leadership who now at the latest perceived the gravity of Lebzelter's marginalized position within the group. Attempting to mitigate the situation, that night they made her a member of the cultural council, responsible for cultural life in the group, certainly an appropriate placement for a woman devoted to theater and literature. A few weeks later she was selected to attend a conference in Bucharest and report the contents back to the group. Despite her complaints of the physical strain entailed by the long journey and her insecurity as to fulfilling the Bucharest mission satisfactorily, that experience did seem to improve her confidence. Physically, however, she continued to weaken. After three months of hard labor she was ill, suffering from debilitating migraines daily. The local doctor ordered for her to be removed from factory labor.

In mid-January the Piatra Neamț hachsharah groups were suddenly shut down by the local police, all participants were immediately sent home with assurances of either an imminent aliyah or placement in a different hachsharah. Neither took place. On March 1st 1949, back in Constanța, Lebzelter wrote:

> My situation becomes more and more unbearable. I went on hachsharah in order to get to *Eretz* and now neither am I on hachsharah nor am I going to *Eretz*. Time is passing, my strength and my patience wane and my nervousness increases. This way or that, by hook or by crook, if only this situation would end. But no end is in sight and I cannot continue to torture myself so much. Often I am gripped by the deepest despair, I cannot begin anything here and if I go, then it must be now, because the clock has already struck midnight. But there is still not a hint of departure.[60]

[59] Lebzelter's Diary, "7 November 1948."
[60] Ibid., "1 March 1949."

Conclusion

After the dissolution of her hachsharah group Lebzelter returned to Constanța to wait, initially fully expecting aliyah. As this hope evaporated her disillusion grew, she wrote less and less of any interaction with the Zionist organization or Jewish community in general, certainly she was no longer active as when promised "no aliyah without hachsharah." When emigration was suddenly permitted in 1950 and she and her mother applied for visas, she made no mention of Zionist organization affiliation, support, or involvement in the procedure.

Inexplicably, Lebzelter's emigration application was rejected, though the governmental regulations at that time specified that all applicants were to be permitted to leave. Hundreds of thousands of others departed over the next few years. The Securitate, ever paranoid, has reports on Zionist activity in Constanța from the mid-1950s, including lists of former leaders from various Zionist organizations: noted next to most of the names are the words "*plecat in Israel*," left for Israel.

Lebzelter was not permitted to leave. Her diaries never again mention her hachsharah time or the organization, she gave no indication that any of the skills learned there were of use, nor that she benefitted emotionally or intellectually from membership within the group; with the exception of a few of the leaders, she did not record a single member by name. Ultimately, the year she spent involved in Busselia and time she spent on hachsharah, rather than forming an anticipatory coda to her ruptured youth in Romania, composed an incongruous prelude to the next twelve years of unwilling confinement within the communist state.

The aim of this introductory examination of one individual's experience within the Romanian hachsharot system is not to criticize the actions or messages of the Zionist organizations active at that time who were working within the framework of possibility at a difficult historical moment. Rather I wish to highlight how the drastically different context in which hachsharot and Zionist organizations operated in Romania as compared to central Europe resulted in divergent experiences for participants. These insights should offer space for exploring alternative or muffled narratives, those which might run counter to a general acknowledgement of early postwar European Zionist enterprises as exclusive spaces of renewal, rehabilitation, or nurturing cradles of Zionist ideology; they

should complicate, diversify, and enrich the historical narrative and our understanding of the postwar period.

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Keywords: Romania, Diaries, Trauma, Bukovina, Hachsharot

How to quote this article:
Julie Dawson, "As to my emotional anguish, there are days when I feel endlessly miserable": *Hachsharot* in Early Postwar Romania and the Limits of Belonging," in "Training for *Aliyah*: Young Jews in *Hachsharot* across Europe between the 1930s and late 1940s," eds. Verena Buser and Chiara Renzo, *Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History. Journal of the Fondazione CDEC* 21, no. 1 (2022), DOI: 10.48248/issn.2037-741X/13306

Hachsharot in Hungary After the Holocaust: Lives and Stories Behind Facts

by *Ildikó Barna* and *Kinga Szemere*

Abstract

The primary aim of our study is to explore the post-Holocaust history of the hachsharot in Hungary through the eyes of their members. Our study is based on a structured analysis of one hundred and one interviews from the USC Shoah Foundation's Visual History Archive. The immediate post-war years saw an unprecedented growth of the Zionist movement in Hungary. During this short period, the hachsharot played a vital role in the lives of those who, unlike most Jews, chose dissimilation. In our study, we explore the interviewees' family backgrounds and their prewar connection to Zionism. We explore in detail their time in the Zionist movement and the hachsharot. However, we do not focus only on the facts, but put special emphasis on personal experiences and feelings. Finally, we also address how the identities of our interviewees changed and how these experiences shaped their first decades after their lives in the hachsharot.

Introduction

Analytical Approach

Implications of the data

Zionism and *Hachsharot* in the Interwar Period

The Zionist Movement in Hungary during and after the Holocaust

Hachsharot after the Holocaust

Zionists' Recruiting Techniques and Participants' Motivations to Join the *Hachsharot*

Life in the *Hachsharot*

Introduction

The second half of the nineteenth century was marked by the strong emancipation and assimilation of a great part of Hungarian Jewry. The liberal nobility, which monopolized political power, supported the more assimilated or assimilating stratum of the Jewish population in the economic modernization of Hungary and protected them from antisemitic attacks. The Jews returned the "favor" with loyalty and efficient assimilation. In fact, the assimilated Jews were also needed as a kind of "ethnic favor ally" because, without them, Hungarians were not in the majority in the multi-ethnic country.[1] Viktor Karády[2] refer to this compromise between the liberal nobility and the Jews by the term "assimilationist social contract."[3] However, it was assimilation not only by objective measures (for example, between 1880 and 1910, the proportion of Hungarian native speaking Jews rose from 59 to 77 percent). Many Jews had intense contact with the majority society and had a strong Hungarian national identity.[4] This high degree of

[1] András Kovács, "Az asszimilációs dilemma," *Világosság* 30, no. 8-9 (1988): 605-612; 606.; Éva Kovács, "Asszimilációs és diszkriminatív tendenciák a magyar társadalomtörténetben (1867–1939)," in *A zsidókérdésről*, eds. Balázs Fűzfa and Gábor Szabó (Szombathely: Németh László Szakkollégium, 1989), 29-37.

[2] Viktor Karády, *The Jews of Europe in the Modern Era: A Socio-historical Outline* (Budapest: Central University Press, 2004), 170-171.

[3] Gábor Gyáni pointed out some controversial points of this theory. For more see: Gábor Gyáni, "Polgárosodás mint zsidó identitás," *BUKSZ* 9, no. 3 (1997): 266-278.

[4] Viktor Karády, "Egyenlőtlen elmagyarosodás, avagy hogyan vált Magyarország magyar nyelvű országgá?," in *Zsidóság, modernizáció, polgárosodás*, ed. Viktor Karády (Budapest: Cserépfalvi Kiadó, 1997), 151-195.

assimilation and the strong national feeling played a significant role in the history of Hungarian Jewry and the development of Zionism.

Zionism found it extremely difficult to take root in Hungary, a country with predominantly assimilated Jews. As Miksa Szabolcsi, the founder of Hungarian Jewish journalism, said when he met Herzl in 1903, "Zionism will suffer a shipwreck in the rock-solid patriotism of Hungarian Jews."[5] Or, as Herzl resignedly wrote in a letter to Ernő Mezei, a Jewish journalist and Hungarian MP, "Hungarian Zionism can be primarily red-white-green."[6] The first congress of the Hungarian Zionist associations was held in Bratislava in 1903. However, mainly due to opposition from the Jewish religious leadership, the Zionist movement could only officially begin to function in 1927. The unpopularity of Zionism in Hungary was also reflected in the low number of members. It never exceeded four to five thousand until 1938, comprising about one percent of the Jews in Hungary.

World War I and especially the Treaty of Trianon[7] ended the reasonably peaceful time for Hungarian Jews. As a result of the treaty, Hungary became an ethnically homogeneous country. Thus the assimilated and acculturated Jews were no longer needed. The *numerus clausus* law[8] introduced in 1920 signaled the changing attitude of the power towards the Jews and clearly marked the dissolution of the assimilationist social contract.[9] The 1930s witnessed the country's apparent shift to the right. People with openly antisemitic political views gained power. The increasingly right-wing regime introduced open anti-Jewish legislation in the late

[5] János Gyurgyák, *A zsidókérdés Magyarországon. Politikai eszmetörténet* (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 2001), 240.

[6] Gábor Schweitzer, "Miért nem kellett Herzl a magyar zsidóknak? A politikai cionizmus kezdtei és a magyarországi zsidó közvélemény," *Budapesti Negyed* 4, no. 2 (1994): 42-55; 55. (Red, white, green are the colors of the Hungarian flag).

[7] The 1920 Treaty of Trianon formally ended World War I between Hungary and the Allied powers. The treaty resulted in Hungary losing two-thirds of its territory and almost two-thirds of its population.

[8] The law stated that the nationalities and races (*népfajok*) of Hungary could only take part in higher education according to their numerical proportion. Although the law applied to all such groups, it was prejudicial only for the Jews.

[9] Mária M. Kovács, *Törvénytől sújtva* (Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó, 2012).

1930s. At the same time, the Germans were returning territories lost in the Treaty of Trianon to Hungary.[10]

These events also had a significant impact on the Zionist movement. The adoption of the anti-Jewish laws pushed to Zionism people who previously had nothing to do with the movement and even people who did not have a strong Jewish (national) identity. It also forced the Jewish religious community leaders, who had opposed Zionism from the beginning, to start cooperating with the movement.[11]

The systematic mass-deportation of Hungarian Jews started in March 1944, after the German occupation of Hungary.[12] It was carried out with the active and enthusiastic involvement of the Hungarian authorities. After the public identification and stigmatization (Yellow Stars), concentration, and segregation (ghettoization), between May 15 and July 9, 1944, some 430,000 Jews were deported from the countryside[13], most of whom were killed. In total, approximately two-thirds of Hungarian Jewry was destroyed. By the end of 1945, 190,000 Jews were living in Hungary.[14] The survivors of the Hungarian Holocaust were mostly Jews from Budapest (119,000 persons), as the deportation was halted at the beginning of July 1944. On the contrary, provincial Jewry almost ceased to exist.[15]

Surviving Hungarian Jews could choose between two possible paths: dissimilation or assimilation. Dissimilation could take several forms. It could mean affirming a previously suppressed Jewish national identity by joining the Zionist movement and could also mean emigration. The first few years after the Holocaust were marked by an unprecedented strengthening of the Zionist movement in Hungary.

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[10] Randolph L. Braham, *A népírtás politikája. A Holocaust Magyarországon* (Budapest: Belvárosi Könyvkiadó, 1997), 1247.

[11] Attila Novák, *Átmenetben. A cionista mozgalom négy éve Magyarországon (1945–1948)* (Budapest: Múlt és Jövő Kiadó, 2000), 18.

[12] It should be noted that the first deportation of so-called "alien" Jews from Hungary was that of 1941 to Kamenets-Podolsk. Those Jews were mainly of Polish origin. However, those Hungarian Jews were also in danger who could not prove their Hungarian citizenship. For more see: Braham, *A népírtás politikája*, 197-205.

[13] The area of Budapest was smaller then. Many places that are now part of Budapest were small settlements from which Jews were also deported.

[14] About a quarter of these people were no longer members of the Jewish denomination.

[15] Braham, *A népírtás politikája.*

In addition, in 1946, at least 100,000 Hungarian Jews were expected to emigrate.[16] However, dissimilation was totally contrary to the decades-long practice of *en masse* assimilation. Furthermore, the historical, political, and social environment also favored further assimilation.

A decline quickly followed the rise in Zionist membership, and the number of those who eventually left Hungary was also significantly lower than expected. Between 1946 and 1949, only approximately 15,000 Hungarian Jews made *aliyah*, and about the same number settled in other countries.[17] This was only partly due to the steady and rapid growth of communist power and the fact that the communist takeover swept away the Zionist movement. The return of surviving Hungarian Jews to the old patterns also played a significant role. They continued to assimilate in line with the communists' expectations and rejected any form of secession from the Hungarian nation. However, it is also worth noting that for many, when they realized the real nature of the Communist regime, it was too late to leave the country as borders were gradually closed down.

There is much scholarship on Hungarian Jews specifically in the immediate postwar period. Its topics include early testimonies and memoirs of Holocaust survivors,[18] Zionism,[19] activities of the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) in Hungary,[20] the operations of the People's Tribunals,[21] Hungarian Jewish

[16] Arieh J. Kochavi, *Post-Holocaust Politics: Britain, the United States and Jewish Refugees (1945–1948)*, (Chapel Hill - London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 194.

[17] Viktor Karády, "Szociológiai kísérlet a magyar zsidóság 1945 és 1956 közötti helyzetének elemzésére," in *Zsidóság az 1945 utáni Magyarországon*, eds. Viktor Karády, András Kovács, Iván Sanders, and Péter Várady (Párizs: Magyar Füzetek, 1984), 37-180; 99; András Erdei, "A magyarországi zsidóság migrációja (1945–1955)," *Beszélő* 9, no. 4 (2004): 69-78.

[18] For example: Rita Horváth, "Jews in Hungary after the Holocaust: The national relief committee for deportees, 1945–1950," *Journal of Israeli History* 19, no. 2 (1998): 69-91; Ferenc Laczó, *Hungarian Jews in the Age of Genocide: An Intellectual History, 1929–1948* (Leiden - Boston: Brill, 2016), 99-133.

[19] The most extensive work on the topic is Novák, *Átmenetben.*

[20] Kinga Frojimovics, "JDC Activity in Hungary, 1945–1953" in *The JDC at 100: A Century of Humanism*, eds. Avinoam Patt, Atina Grossmann, Linda G. Levi, and Maud S. Mandel (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2019), 421-438; Viktória Bányai, "The Impact of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee's Aid Strategy on Lives of Jewish Families in Hungary, 1945–1949" in *Jewish and Romani: Families in the Holocaust and Its Aftermath*, eds. Eliyana R. Adler and Kateřina Čapková (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2021), 115-127.

[21] For example, Ildikó Barna and Andrea Pető, *Political Justice in Budapest after WWII* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2015).

Displaced Persons,[22] and resurgent antisemitism.[23] Yet, none of these works explicitly addresses the *hachsharot*, especially not through the eyes of their members. The present study is based on a structured analysis of one hundred and one testimonies from the USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive (VHA). The use of oral testimonies and the sociological approach we adopt shed new light on Hungarian Jews who chose to join the hachsharot. The members' voices are functional to understand the organization and daily life in the hachsharot and go behind the Zionist narrative and uncover the most overlooked aspects: personal motivations and what the hachsharot meant to the participants.

Analytical Approach

We decided to limit our research to those interviewees who were born in what is today Hungary[24] and were in hachsharah or organized hachsharah there after the Holocaust.[25] Moreover, we included only those who not only mentioned this fact but provided substantial information about it. First, we used the "hakhshara"[26] index term in the VHA filtering for the place of birth, and then we manually selected all those interviewees meeting the above criteria. It resulted in 101 testimonies: eighty-seven of them in Hebrew, nine in English, and five in Hungarian.[27] Given the research topic, it is understandable that the proportion

[22] See among others, Ildikó Barna, "Hungarian Jewish Holocaust Survivors Registered in Displaced Persons Camps in Apulia: An Analysis Based on the Holdings of the Arolsen (International Tracing Service) Digital Archive" in *Beyond Camps and Forced Labour*, eds. Suzanne Bardgett, Christine Schmidt, and Dan Stone (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 165-184; 167-169.; András Szécsényi, "Hillersleben: Spatial Experiences of a Hungarian Jew in a German DP Camp, 1945," *The Hungarian Historical Review* 9, no. 3 (2020): 470-490.

[23] For example, Andrea Pető, "About the Narratives of a Blood Libel in Post-Shoah Hungary" in *Comparative Central European Holocaust Studies,* eds. Louise Olfa Vasvári and Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2009), 40-49; Péter Apor, Tamás Kende, Michala Lônčíková, and Valentin Săndulescu, "Post-World War II anti-Semitic pogroms in East and East Central Europe: collective violence and popular culture," *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire* 26, no. 6 (2019): 913-927.

[24] Even the oldest hachsharah members were in their early 20s in the years after 1945. Therefore, they were born after 1920, i.e., after the Treaty of Trianon.

[25] There were some interviewees who participated in the Zionist movement during the war as well.

[26] The VHA uses this spelling.

[27] There were some interviews in other languages, but these were excluded from the analysis.

of interviews conducted in Hebrew was extremely high. While in the VHA archive only about one-fifth of the interviewees born in present-day Hungary gave interviews in Hebrew, the proportion of such interviewees in the group we studied was more than 85 percent. All but one of the interviewees living in Israel was interviewed in Hebrew; one spoke Hungarian. In addition, one interviewee gave the interview in Hebrew but lived in Canada. Five of the nine English-speaking interviewees lived in the United States, three in Australia and one in Canada. In addition to the Hungarian-speaking interviewee above, three of the other Hungarian-speaking interviewees lived in Hungary and one in the United States.
Gender-wise 56 percent of the interviewees (57 persons) under research were male, and 44 percent were female (44 persons). In accordance with the VHA interview methodology, a pre-interview questionnaire was completed before the interview, which, among others, included questions about the interviewee's date of birth and prewar religious identity. The interviewees were born between 1920 and 1935. However, they are not evenly distributed, as those born between 1925 and 1929 account for almost two-thirds of the interviewees (65 persons). This is understandable as young people joined the hachsharot at 17-18, and the oldest hachsharah members were 22-23 years old. Regarding religious background, 51 percent of the interviewees had an Orthodox (52 persons), while 41 percent had a Neolog family background (41 persons). Two interviewees said their families were Hasidic, and six chose the "non-observant/non-practicing" category.[28]
After the selection of interviews, we carried out a structured analysis. First, we recorded the primary demographic characteristics of the interviewees (gender, date, and place of birth), and we added the prewar and postwar religious identity given by the interviewee. In the structured analysis, we explored the following topics:

- Relevant prewar experiences: we examined the survivors' relationship with Zionism, if any. We also checked whether they had been in hachsharah before the war.

[28] In the original responses, interviewees also used the categories "traditional Judaism" (20 persons), "Judaism" (13 persons), "liberal Judaism" (3 persons), and "conservative Judaism" (1 person). Furthermore, there were two persons who did not answer the question. In these cases, we used the interviews to decide which of the above categories the interviewee belonged to.

- Postwar Zionism: here, we looked at how the survivors came into contact with the Zionist movement, which organization they joined, what were their motivations and feelings.
- Postwar hachsharah experience: we approached this topic from several angles. In addition to the time and place of the hachsharah, we recorded the information on the hachsharah provided by the interviewee (the number of members, organizational issues, working duties, activities, etc.) However, we were also interested in more personal information such as their motivations for joining, feelings about the hachsharah, personal connections, the impact of the hachsharah on their identity.
- Migration history: we recorded the country where the interview was conducted, whether the interviewee eventually made aliyah, if not, what the reasons were, if so, whether they stayed in Israel and if not, what the reasons were to leave Israel.
- Post-hachsharah life: we looked at how the interviewee's life evolved in the first years or decades after their Zionist and hachsharah experience.

This systematic analysis allowed the identification of distinct patterns that were very frequent. Our analysis focuses on these more general patterns rather than on specific characteristics.

Implications of the Data

In this chapter, we would like to discuss the potentials and the limitations of the data used, namely, what we can and cannot conclude from the analysis. Although the Visual History Archive contains interviews with more than 54,000 Holocaust survivors, including nearly 3,500 Hungarian-born ones, the selection of interviewees cannot be considered random. For this reason, our results cannot be generalized for any larger population. However, the presence of many typical scenarios common to many interviewees suggests that these patterns existed and are worth analyzing. Furthermore, it is also essential that these scenarios coincide with the findings of scholarly literature.

It is important to remember that these interviews are based on retrospection, as they were conducted some fifty years after the events, and they are not about

historical authenticity. As Éva Kovács argues, "testimony is primarily not a historical source, but a present construction of the past, even if the narrators are entangled in history."[29]

The next aspect to consider is the way the interviews were conducted. The VHA interview protocol was based on the semi-structured interview method, designed to ensure that the interviews were conducted within a standardized framework. Therefore, the interviewers were provided with a guide consisting of questions to discuss with the interviewee. However, interviewees had the opportunity to elaborate more on some topics or even bring up new ones. This interview methodology was intended to encourage the interviewees to narrate their lives in chronological order in their own words.

Nevertheless, and this is also evident from the VHA interviews, the interviewer had a significant role in how much emphasis they placed on a topic, what they specifically asked about, how much they encouraged the interviewee to report in detail on a specific topic.[30] It follows, therefore, that it is not possible to determine from the interviews how important a life event was in the interviewee's life, for example, by how much they talk about it. It is also worth noting that most interviewees did not give their testimonies in their native languages. There are several interviews where it is clear that the interviewees were limited by their language proficiency.

Zionism and *Hachsharot* in the Interwar Period

In Hungary, except for a brief period after the First World War, the relationship between the Zionist movement and the representatives of the Jewish religion was characterized by continuous opposition until the Second World War. This was true for both the Neolog and the Orthodox communities,[31] even if their reasons

[29] Éva Kovács, "'Post-testimony: A tanúságtétel helye a soá történeti elbeszélésében," *Socio.hu* 8, no. 3 (2018): 107-119; 109. Quotes from Hungarian publications have been translated into English by the authors.

[30] For a description and critical analysis of the VHA methodology, see Noah Shenker, *Reframing Holocaust Testimony* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2015), 112-150.

[31] The formal recognition of the Jewish religion required the establishment of a national organization of the organizationally dispersed Jewish communities. In 1868, the Jewish Congress'

differed.[32] The leadership of Neology "saw Zionists as the violators of the traditional assimilationist 'contract,' a threat to the rights that had already been won, to Judaism as a denomination, to those who had moved from a religious to a national basis, and thus cast doubt on the Hungarian identity of the Jews."[33] At the same time, the representatives of Orthodoxy stressed the supremacy of religion. They argued that "no artificial movement can change the destiny which the Almighty has destined for Israel."[34]

Several of our interviewees who were from a Neolog or non-observant background reported the great extent of assimilation and the importance of Hungarian national identity. For example, Paul Szenes,[35] from a Neolog family, said that he heard from his father several times that first they were Hungarians, then they were Jews, and that they were part of the Hungarian nation. In the case of Yeshayahu Kovetz,[36] he had a non-religious family but went to a Jewish school, where pupils were taught that they were Jewish by religion but Hungarians by nationality. Another telling example is that of Zeev Kohn. He came from a Neolog family and got the following explanation when he asked his father what Zionism was. "Zionists are those Hungarian Jews who are not good people, who want to leave Hungary."[37]

Many of our interviewees talked about their parents or religious community being anti-Zionist. In many cases, parents also used religious principles, as in the case of Yosef Klein,[38] who grew up in an Orthodox family where it was forbidden to talk

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call for its formation was unsuccessful, leading to a unique sectarian schism and the creation of three separate groups: the progressive Neologs, the strictly traditionalist Orthodox, and the smallest one, the Status Quo Ante Jews, see Karády, *The Jews of Europe in the Modern Era*, 165-166.

[32] Géza Komoróczy, *A zsidók története Magyarországon II. 1849-től a jelenkorig* (Pozsony: Kalligram, 2012), 289-295.

[33] Novák, *Átmenetben*, 15.

[34] Gabor Schweitzer, "Miért nem kellett Herzl a magyar zsidóknak?," *Zsidó Híradó* 50 (1897), 50.

[35] Paul Szenes, interview by Tzippi Shamayah, October 18, 1996, interview 21302, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, Moshav Ben Amani, Northern, Israel, segment 17.

[36] Yeshayahu Kovetz, interview by Sara El-Ram, August 30, 1996, interview 19337, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, Givataym, Tel Aviv, Israel, segments 7-8.

[37] Zeev Kohn, interview by Eva Bandel, October 21, 1996, interview 21815, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, Kibbutz Geva, Northern, Israel, segment 25. Quotes from interviews recorded in Hebrew and Hungarian have been translated into English by the authors.

[38] Joseph Klein, interview by Ronit Gabai, August 13, 1997, interview 31980, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, Kiryat Gat, Southern, Israel, segment 15.

about Zionism, as Jews will return to Eretz Israel only when the Messiah comes. In other cases, parents feared that their children would make aliyah and therefore opposed membership in the movement. In the life of one of our interviewees, the parents' extreme anti-Zionism, more precisely the father's, led to tragic events. As a child, Yitzhak Segal lived in Gyöngyös,[39] a town in northern Hungary, where one of the Neolog rabbis was a Zionist. Yitzhak admired him and heard about the movement from him. In 1938, Yitzhak's younger brother, who became a Zionist, wanted to leave for Palestine, which his father forbade, but he went anyway. His father reported it to the gendarmerie, who first imprisoned his brother and later sent him to forced labor, where he died.

Consistent with the low popularity of Zionism, most of our interviewees had little or no contact with Zionism before the war. For many, Zionism meant people who raised money for Palestine. Some interviewees mentioned that they were only familiar with the so-called blue box of the Keren Kayemet.[40] As Steven Feldheim summed up so well in his interview: "For us, Zionism was just a mystic word which means that we should collect money for people that want to go to Israel to buy land. That's all we know about, and that's all our older generation wants us to know."[41] Also interesting was Hava Blass' recollection, who said that in school, her antisemitic classmates told her to go to Palestine. Therefore, for her, Palestine was a curse word. "It was something like go to hell!".[42]

Due to the constant opposition of the official representatives of the Jewish community, the National Office of Hungarian Israelites (*Magyarországi Izraeliták Országos Irodája*), the Hungarian Zionist Association could start its legal operations only in 1927. Left-wing Zionists made up about one-third of organized Zionists during the interwar period. There were equally large groups of Klal

[39] Yitzhak Segal, interview by Varda Zeelig, November 23, 1997, interview 37512, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, Givataym, Tel Aviv, Israel, segments 41-43 and 46-48.

[40] Its full name is Keren Kayemet LeYisrael, which is the Jewish National Fund founded in 1901 to buy and develop land in Palestine.

[41] Steven Feldheim, interview by Irit Kave, December 10, 1996, interview 24487, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, segments 9-10.

[42] Hava Blass, interview by Teuma Beeri, November 8, 1996, interview 22713, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, Kibbutz Yagur, Haifa, Israel, segment 8.

(General) Zionists from the center and religious Zionists from the right. The influence of the revisionist Betar movement was much smaller.[43]

The various Zionist groups all operated hachsharot in the interwar period. However, the number of their members did not exceed a few hundred. The movements' central hachsharot were located in Budapest, and hachsharot operated in bigger cities. There were some hachsharot in the countryside, but they were not permanent.[44] These institutions' primary aim was to prepare young Jews, the *halutzim,* both physically and ideologically for aliyah and life in Palestine. Initially, Zionism did not include the objective of the restratification of Jews, i.e., to direct many more Jews to agricultural and manual work and reduce their share in intellectual occupations. This objective was first linked by left-wing Zionism to the creation of the Jewish national home, but was later taken up by other Zionist groups as well. In the latter case, this was not dictated primarily by ideological convictions, but by the reality that the new country would need these so-called productive workers in far greater numbers than were available.[45] In Hungary, the Palestine Office distributed the certificates issued by the Jewish Agency, and they also supervised the hachsharot. To obtain a certificate, one had to participate in a hachsharah, usually at least for two years. There were both industrial and agricultural hachsharot,[46] where young Jews could go from the ages of 17-18. In the cities and during the winter hachsharot members worked in various factories, but they lived together. In the evenings, they had common activities: listening to lectures, participating in discussion evenings, learning Hebrew, dancing Israeli folk dances, the hora, etc. In the agricultural hachsharot during the summer, members usually worked on the land of a Jewish landowner. In the hachsharot, members had no private property, and the money they earned was used collectively. In addition to hachsharot, Zionist youth organized summer camps, the so-called *moshavot.*[47]

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[43] Novák, *Átmenetben*, 14-17.

[44] Attila Novák, "Cionisták, baloldaliak, államrezon: Cionizmus és államhatalom a 30-as évek Magyarországán," *Századok* 130, no. 6 (1996): 1341-1392.

[45] Novák, *Átmenetben*, 129-130.

[46] In Hungary, urban and industrial hachsharot were also called *plugot*. However, the terminology was not consistent. In this paper, we only use the term hachsharah.

[47] Novák, "Cionisták, baloldaliak, államrezon," 1341-1392.

From 1933 onward, the Zionist movement in Hungary was subject to constant harassment by the authorities. Their attention was then mainly focused on the Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir, who were identified with the Communists, a political ideology severely persecuted by the regime. The Hungarian Zionist Association responded by excluding Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir from its ranks. This move, however, put the Association in a paradoxical situation, since it was precisely the strongest branch of Zionism both in the world and Hungary that was left out. In 1936, the anti-Zionist campaign went into full gear. Hachsharot were subjected to constant police harassment, and their members were repeatedly brought before the police. By this time, however the authorities' repressive activities extended not only to left-wing Zionists but to the entire movement. The police proceedings made young people reluctant to participate in hachsharot. Moreover, several movements ended up closing their hachsharot.[48]

The Zionist Movement in Hungary During and After the Holocaust

> Zionism offered a very different pattern and strategy of identification than official Hungarian Jewry, which promoted the traditional Hungarian-Jewish symbiosis. However, this pattern of identification could not come into being until the very situation for which it was born was not given, as its most important precondition, i.e. legalised discrimination, was not yet present.[49]

The start of the openly anti-Jewish legislation in 1938 marked the beginning of this period, and the strengthening of the Zionist movement in Hungary began. Moreover, young Jews socialized in much more active and well-organized Zionist groups from the annexed territories were brought into the country. These Zionists played a considerable role in the rise of the Hungarian Zionist movement.[50] In

[48] Ibid.; Attila Novák, "A chance not taken: Zionist-Hungarian diplomatic co-operation in the second half of the 1930s" in *Jewish Studies at the CEU II. 1999–2001*, eds. András Kovács and Eszter Andor (Budapest: Central European University, 2002), 327-353.

[49] Novák, *Átmenetben*, 18.

[50] Novák, "Cionisták, baloldaliak, államrezon," 1341-1392.; Braham, *A népírtás politikája*, 1012-1121.

this period, the number of members increased: while in 1937 only about 7,300 *shekels* (certificates of membership) were sold, in 1939 the figure was about 28,000.[51]

Most Hungarian Jews, however, even after seeing the increasing anti-Jewish legislation and the reports of Jewish refugees, mainly from Poland, did not believe that what finally happened could happen to them.[52] There were sharp generational differences behind the perceptions of the situation. Many young people saw the lie of the "assimilationist contract" mentioned earlier, i.e., that it did not matter how much they assimilated or how much they felt Hungarian, Hungarian society did not accept them. At the same time, the older generation typically still believed in it. Steven Feldheim described this process very eloquently when he said:

> We were introduced to being Hungarian, and Jewishness was only a sort of second thought. It was just a religion. But the tragic part of it is as I grew up, the system always reminded me. First, that I'm not a pure Hungarian, but I'm a Hungarian Jew. And then, later on, they called me Jewish Hungarian, and by 1941-42 I was not Hungarian, only a Jew.[53]

Anah Klayn[54], who came from a non-religious family, illustrated the generational differences very well when she talked about the period from the early 1940s onward. She was fourteen at the time. She explained that her grandparents' generation still had a very strong religious background, and that Judaism meant a lot to them. For her parents' generation Judaism was less important, but being Hungarian was on the contrary very significant. By the 1940s, her own generation no longer felt that they were getting anything from Hungary and the Hungarians.

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[51] Karády, "Szociológiai kísérlet a magyar zsidóság 1945 és 1956 közötti helyzetének elemzésére," 93. It is important, to note that by 1939 Hungary had already annexed certain territories, which in itself increased the membership of the Zionist movement. However, even taking this into account, the number of shekels sold in 1939 showed a sharp increase.

[52] Randolph L. Braham, *The Politics of Genocide: The Holocaust in Hungary* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press), 13-14 and 29.

[53] Feldheim, interview 24487, segments 8-9.

[54] Anah Klayn, interview by Yitzchak Hadas, October 20, 1996, interview 21798, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, Kfar Sava, Central, Israel, segments 14-19.

This led Anah to join the Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir during the war, where she became a very active member.

Judit Charody's testimony also illustrates the realization that Jews were not considered part of Hungarian society and the generation gap that existed between the youth and their parents. In her interview, Judit mentions that Jewish scouts were excluded from the Scouting movement in 1941. She says tellingly, "That's when we took the regent's[55] photo off from the wall."[56] That is also when she joined the Hanoar Hatzioni, as one of her friends had already become a member. She also tells us that later she met some Polish refugees in Hanoar Hatzioni, and they told them all the things they went through.

> We believed them, but our parents didn't believe them. They all said – my mother, my father said, maybe it happened in Poland. It never will happen in Hungary. When, later on, it started to happen in Hungary, in the countryside, then my parents and most of the other children's parents said, maybe it happens in the countryside, but it will never, ever happen in Budapest.[57]

And later she said, "when my parents saw every day what was happening, they realized that we were right from the start."[58]

Zionists, especially the halutzim, were heavily involved in the rescue and resistance movement during the Holocaust.[59] This is not only significant in that they saved many lives but also, as we shall see, in the postwar history of the Zionist movement.

> There is no point in comparing the activity of the Halutz movements in Hungary with those in Eastern Europe. There was no expectation whatever, not even on the part of the youth groups themselves, that the

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[55] Miklós Horthy served as a regent in Hungary in the interwar period.

[56] Judit Charody, interview by Daniel Feiler, August 14, 1995, interview 4455, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, Northbridge, New South Wales, Australia, segment 24.

[57] Ibid., segment 18.

[58] Ibid., segment 43.

[59] Braham, *A népírtás politikája*, 1088-1101; Peretz Revesz, *Standing Up to Evil: A Zionist's Underground Rescue Activities in Hungary* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2019).

> Halutz movements would become one of the principal elements in the life of Hungarian Jewry. Their ideas and their social composition made them completely alien to the character of Hungarian Jews.[60]

As discussed earlier the weakness of the Halutz movement and the annihilation of Jews at an unprecedented pace (deportation was executed within two and a half months!) narrowed down the activities of the Hungarian Zionist youth groups. Thus the Zionist youth were mainly engaged in producing and distributing false papers and the transfer of Jews, primarily family members and associates, to Romania, Slovakia, and Yugoslavia.[61]

As mentioned before, the losses of Hungarian Jewry were enormous in the Holocaust. Yet, a relatively large number of mainly assimilated Jews survived the horrors. The period between 1945 and 1948 was marked by the advance and strengthening of the Zionist movement in Hungary. Four parties dominated the Zionist scene: the radical left-wing Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir, the religious Mizrachi, the politically centrist Klal Zionists (General Zionists), and the social-democrat Ichud Mapai.[62] These parties had their own youth organizations. The Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir had its youth movement under the same name, the Mizrachi had the Bnei Akiva, the Klal Zionists had the Hanoar Hatzioni,[63] and the Ichud Mapai had the (Gordonia) Maccabi Hatzair and the Dror Habonim.[64]

The membership of the Zionist movement grew significantly.[65] However, according to András Kovács, this alone would not have been enough for Zionism to become the leading force in autonomous Jewish politics that emerged after the war. In addition to the shock of the Holocaust, the disappointment at the prospect of assimilation, and the Hungarian state's refusal to accept responsibility for the

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[60] Asher Cohen, *The Halutz resistance in Hungary 1942-1944* (Boulder, CO: Social Science Monographs, 1986), 63.

[61] Ibid., 1070-1075.

[62] The right-wing revisionist Betar had very few members in Hungary and the group was completely marginalized. Novák, *Átmenetben*, 45.

[63] From 1946 it also included Haoved Hatzioni, mentioned by some of our interviewees.

[64] Novák, *Átmenetben*, 29.

[65] The support for the Zionist movement in Hungary can be party captured by the number of shekel purchases. In 1946, the number of shekels sold was 95,000. Between September 1947 and September 1948, it was still somewhat more than 68,000 although by that time many Jews have already emigrated. Ibid., 26 and 95.

Jew's suffering, a combination of specific circumstances was needed. On the one hand, Jewish public opinion felt that the former leadership of the Jewish community was inadequate to represent the interests of the Jewish people: community leaders were compromised by suspicions of collaboration. In contrast, Zionist groups were actively involved in the rescue and resistance. It was also important that the main Zionist groups operating in Hungary were connected predominantly to the political left. In the eyes of the Jews, left-wing political parties represented the idea of anti-fascism. It was also already clear that these parties would play a significant role in the new political system that was being established. The popularity of Zionism was boosted by the fact that the dream of the State of Israel was within reach and for some time was supported by the Soviet Union. Finally, many international Zionist organizations, which were still operating freely, provided practical support. Some international Jewish organizations, primarily the JDC, provided significant financial support to strengthen the movement in Hungary.[66]

Hachsharot After the Holocaust

After the Holocaust, among the aims of hachsharot created by all Zionist movements was still the restratification and productivization of Hungarian Jews. On the one hand, many believed that antisemitism was partly due to the Jewish population's unbalanced occupational structure and that without changing this, the "Jewish question" would be reignited. In addition, all Zionist groups wanted to prepare their members for aliyah and the life awaiting them in Palestine.[67]
The objectives of restratification and productivization were taken very seriously in the Hungarian Zionist movement, especially the left-wing movements. For

[66] András Kovács, "Hungarian Jewish Politics from the End of the Second World War until the Collapse of Communism" in *Jews and the State: Dangerous Alliances and he Perils of Privilege*, ed. Ezra Mendelsohn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 124-156; 129-131.

[67] We use the term "Palestine" because as will see that the hachsharot in Hungary had almost disappeared by the time the State of Israel was proclaimed. For more on restratification and productivization see Ferenc A. Szabó. "Pusztulás és újjászületés," *Valóság* 31, no. 11 (1988): 60-72; 66.

example, they explicitly opposed further education. Kathleen Zahavi, a member of Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir, had such an experience.

> I started the college. [...] But, the Zionist organization had one issue, that was the main concern, that nobody learns anything. [...] Because if you had any profession, then you wouldn't go to the kibbutz, and you don't want to work outside in the fields and so and so. [...] They forced me to stop going to college. Actually, forcing not physically but mentally. You know, if you want to be with us, you have to follow our policy which was not to have any profession.[68]

In our sample there are eight people who were not only participants in the hachsharot but also organizers. Only two of them had had active roles previously in the Halutz Resistance movement.[69] We would like to highlight the stories of the two organizers. Shmuel Santo[70] and his wife Hedva were asked to organize a Dror Habonim hachsharah. They looked for abandoned places and organized a hachsharah in Budapest and another in the countryside. The other case is that of Yitzhak Segal,[71] who talked about the pogroms of 1946 in North-Eastern Hungary.[72] He said that the Zionist organizations decided not to be silent and organized a hachsharah as a response in Center, a village in that very region.
The leaders of the hachsharot were the *madrichim*, who were usually older. Some of them were locals, but especially in smaller settlements, it also happened that someone from the city was sent there. Here too, Hungarians from across the border played an important role. Our interviewees talked mainly about

[68] Kathleen Zahavi, interview by Simon Zelcovitch, November 18, 1996, interview 22898, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, North York, Ontario, Canada, segments 124-125.
[69] Yet it is important to note that many organizers were Hungarian speaking "refugees" from Slovakia or the Transcarpathian region who had to go underground before March 1944 and lived in Budapest with false papers. The main reason for their active participation was that they had more experience in resistance, organizing groups and had a much firmer Zionist background. As mentioned earlier, these people are outside the scope of our analyses.
[70] Shmuel Santo, interview by Mira Nov, January 21, 1997, interview 26379, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, Rishon Litzion, Central, Israel, segments 53-56.
[71] Segal, interview 37512, segments 161-162.
[72] Apor, Kende, Lônčíková, and Săndulescu, "Post-World War II anti-Semitic pogroms in East and East Central Europe: collective violence and popular culture," 913-927.

Hungarian-speaking Jews from Czechoslovakia who had a lot of experience, which they shared. Several of our interviewees were sent to madrich training camps. Besides learning how to care for children, they also learned about Eretz Israel and Zionism. However, it seems that not all leaders were sent to special camps. Several of our interviewees reported that although they were admitted to the hachsharah as simple members, they excelled there and were therefore made leaders. Such "promotion" may have taken place also when the leader of the hachsharah made aliyah.

Zionists' Recruiting Techniques and Participants' Motivations to join the *Hachsharot*

It is already clear from what we have described that mainly young people participated in the Zionist movement in Hungary. After the war, the movement's members were primarily those who had lost all or part of their families in the Holocaust.

Many children were being cared for in various children's homes run by the JDC: 2,900 children in May 1946, and about 1,650 a year later.[73] There were several types of children's homes in Hungary: day-care and boarding homes *(maon)* for children up to about 14 years of age, and the so-called middle *(mittel)* hachsharot (MiHa) for 15-17-year-olds. Many of these institutions were run by Zionists and financed mainly by the JDC.[74] Some of the interviewees we studied were in a MiHa first and later became hachsharah members.

Several of our interviewees reported working as leaders (*madrichim*) or staff in such children's homes. One of the parents' criticisms about these homes was precisely that they were taking in Zionist teenagers as staff, who had no pedagogical knowledge. In addition, surviving parents often felt that they were being wholly separated from their children as the Zionists feared that young people would not make aliyah while under the influence of their parents.[75]

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[73] Bányai, "The Impact of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee's Aid Strategy on Lives of Jewish Families in Hungary, 1945–1949," 115-127; Novák, *Átmenetben*, 118.

[74] Ibid., 118-120.

[75] Bányai, "The Impact of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee's Aid Strategy on Lives of Jewish Families in Hungary, 1945–1949," 115-127; 120.

Another important place for organized recruitment was the winter and especially the summer camps (*moshavot*). Several Zionist organizations held such camps, often advertised as free holidays, but in fact, recruitment took place.[76] One of the biggest and best-known of these camps was on the southern shore of Lake Balaton, in Balatonboglár, which several of our interviewees mentioned.

In addition to these organized ways of recruitment, several of our interviewees reported that they looked for orphans in cities and smaller towns who could be potential members of the movement. For example, Binyamin Shavit[77] was a member of the Maccabi Hatzair's leadership until 1948. He looked for Jewish youth (and their parents) ready to join their hachsharah and make aliyah. Interestingly, he was also charged with finding those, especially non-Jews in the border villages (mainly with Slovakia), who were able and willing to help the Zionists in illegal emigration.

Most of our interviewees joined a hachsharah soon after the liberation. Over 40 percent of our interviewees (44 persons) had joined already in 1945, and a further 35 percent (35 persons) did so in 1946. We already mentioned that the proportion of Budapest Jews among the survivors was very high. However, 80 percent of our interviewees were from the countryside. Indeed, many of our interviewees returned from concentration camps or forced labor and realized that their family members had been killed. Some survivors went back to their former residence and tried to start a new life. However, when they saw that this was not possible, either for objective or emotional reasons, they joined one of the hachsharot, mainly to make aliyah as soon as possible. As Chaya Kővári said in her testimony, "I didn't want to continue living among the murderers [...] I wanted to go to our country."[78]

Although the Zionist organizations tried to establish permanent hachsharot, this did not happen. Our interviewees alone mentioned more than sixty different locations. Looking at their spatial distribution, except for Budapest and its suburbs, there were significantly more hachsharot in Eastern Hungary, formerly

[76] Novák, *Átmenetben*, 122.

[77] Binyamin Shavit, interview by Mira Schacham Golan, May 24, 1998, interview 41593, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, Mosav Rispon, Central, Israel, segments 54-59 and 63-69.

[78] Chaya Kővári, interview by Sylvia Ben Simon, January 18, 1998, interview 39251, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, Kiryat Yam, Haifa, Israel, segments 117-118.

home to large Jewish communities, than in the western part of the country.[79] Hachsharot were established in many different places. Sometimes Zionists received or occupied a building or a farm. Sometimes they rented them. Several hachsharot were founded on farms formerly maintained by MIKÉFE (Hungarian Israelite Association of Crafts and Agriculture).[80] But there were also cases where they operated in properties abandoned by Jews, whose owners did not return, or in mansions of former barons and counts.

The most common motivation for joining a hachsharah was the desire to make aliyah. Some of our interviewees were already Zionists during the war, and after the Holocaust, they rejoined the movement. However, most of the interviewees joined after the war, often invited by family members, friends, and acquaintances who were already Zionists. Many interviewees also reported various emotional motivations. For example, it was important for them to belong somewhere or to someone after the loss of their families. As Esther Magda Ungar said, "I wanted people surrounding me whom I could love."[81] Some former Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir and Bnei Akiva members reported joining the organization specifically because of its ideology.

Our interviewees have almost exclusively positive memories of the hachsharot. Many remember it as "[o]ne of the happiest years of [their] life."[82] Nili Kochva felt that she "was already in Israel, among Jews. It was a small Eretz Israel."[83] Those who had lost their families, and there were many of them, mainly emphasized a sense of togetherness and belonging. For example, Irene Adler said

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[79] For example: Debrecen, Encs, Elek, Makó, Miskolc, Nyíregyháza, Ózd, Sátoraljaújhely, Szeged.

[80] The Hungarian Israelite Association of Crafts and Agriculture (MIKÉFE, Magyar Izraelita Kézmű és Földművelésügyi Egyesület) was founded in 1942, primarily as an advocacy organization as the guilds did not admit Jews as members. Later, training in agriculture and gardening began. The association also had a boarding house, which, according to recollections, was run according to the principles of the early kibbutzim. László Harsányi, "A magyarországi zsidó egyesületek fél évszázada," *Aetas* 31, no. 2 (2016): 32-51; 44.

[81] Esther Magda Ungar, interview by Sari Gal, June 24, 1998, interview 42442, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, Kibbutz Nir Galim, D.N.Evtah, Central, Israel, segment 155.

[82] Yaakov Barzilay, interview by Tali Nativ-Ironi, September 15, 1995, interview 6870, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, Raanana, Central, Israel, segment 105.

[83] Nili Kochva, interview by Orna Bahat, October 29, 1998, interview 47710, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, Moshav Nehalim, Central, Israel, segment 141.

that "I didn't feel this loneliness. I felt that I belonged someplace."[84] Many people felt that the hachsharot were their new family and expressed this explicitly. Several interviewees mentioned that it was nice to be around people who had experienced the same or similar things. In many of the recollections, we witnessed new human bonds being built. Many found their future husbands and wives in the hachsharah. Many also married there. Hava Blass[85] recounted that eight couples married at the same time when they married, and they used the very same ring. Besides marriages, several people reported that they had made lifelong friendships in the hachsharah.

Life in the *Hachsharot*

All Zionist organizations had hachsharot, both industrial and agricultural. We mentioned earlier that in the interwar period, the condition for aliyah was two years of hachsharah. After the Holocaust, this was not taken so seriously. Immediately after the war, making aliyah still required some time spent in a hachsharah. However, when the political changes made it clear that the Zionists, in fact, rescued those who wanted to leave Hungary, it was no longer required.[86] The interview with Adel Taub[87] illustrates the existence and loosening of this condition very well. Adel was in a Bnei Akiva hachsharah in Budapest for three weeks, where she met her future husband, who had been in the hachsharah already for two years and was a leader *(madrich)* there. Her future husband went to the center of Mizrachi and told them that he had a "serious *bachura*"[88] and wanted to take her with him to Palestine. They got permission and made aliyah together.

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[84] Irene Adler, interview by Rita Lowenstein, May 30, 1995, interview 2896, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, Bronx, New York, USA, segment 129.

[85] Blass, interview 22713, segment 61.

[86] After the foundation of Israel, the country adopted an open immigration policy. For more on this see Aviva Halamish, "Zionist Immigration Policy Put to the Test: Historical Analysis of Israel's immigration policy 1948–1951," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 7, no. 2 (2008): 119-134.

[87] Adel Taub, interview by Dan Danieli, May 5, 1998, interview 42036, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, New York, New York, USA, segment 100.

[88] The name for a girlfriend in the Zionist movement.

The size of the hachsharot varied greatly: some had 15-20 members, but there were also much larger ones with up to seventy members. As mentioned before, in all the hachsharot members shared everything; there was no private property. Some interviewees reported that they even shared their clothes. All the salaries were collected, and money was spent together. Life in the hachsharot, in many regards, reproduced the lifestyle of the kibbutzim in Palestine. However, the ideologies of the movements running the hachsharot shaped the participants' daily lives differently. In the hachsharot, boys and girls lived together. However, the rules for boy-girl relationships in religious hachsharot were stricter. For example, there were hachsharot where boys and girls could sleep together even before marriage, whereas in the Mizrachi hachsharot, this was entirely out of the question. As one of our interviewees said, "there was no hanky-panky in those days."[89] In the case of Adel Taub, before joining a religious hachsharah she had come into contact with Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir and Haoved Hatzioni and was horrified to see "how the girls and boys behaved."[90]

During the day, hachsharah members did some "productive" work, and in the evening, they studied together, which in practice served as their "ideological" preparation. In each hachsharah, they learned about Zionism, Palestine, sang Zionist songs, danced the hora. However, the extent of Hebrew study varied greatly. There were places where regular Hebrew classes were held and places where hardly any Hebrew was taught. Some interviewees explicitly pointed out in their testimony that they missed proper Hebrew language instruction. Consequently, many people after aliyah struggled with language difficulties.[91] There were also differences in what they learned. In Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir hachsharot, the topics included Socialism, Marxism, and Leninism as well. In the religious hachsharot, they learned about the Torah, and besides Modern Hebrew, some Biblical Hebrew was also taught. Our interviewees' accounts clearly showed that learning was not a one-way process, but an essential part of it was reflecting on and discussing what had been learned.

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[89] Edward, Adler, interview by Rosalie Franks, November 6,1995, interview 8772, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, Providence, Rhode Island, USA, segment 88.

[90] Taub, interview 42036, segment 99.

[91] Novák, *Átmenetben*, 129.

In industrial hachsharot, members learned and worked in a wide range of trades. There were industrial hachsharot, where members worked and lived in the same building. However, there were other types of industrial hachsharot where members worked in different places during the day and went back to the hachsharah in the evening. An essential part of the hachsharah was living together. One of our interviewees reported that she initially went to the hachsharah every day but slept at her sister's house. She was told that if she did not sleep there, it was not a hachsharah.[92]

In the agricultural hachsharot, several types of agricultural work were carried out. There were places where only crops were grown, but animals were also kept in others. Industrial and agricultural hachsharot were often separated by season. Several groups lived in the city in winter, engaged in industrial work, and then maintained agricultural hachsharot from early spring to late autumn. The division of labor between boys and girls often followed very conservative patterns. In most places, girls cooked, did the laundry, cleaned the house, while boys worked in the fields or the workshops and factories.

In addition to the industrial and agricultural training courses mentioned above, there was also physical training in some places. For example, Michael Ofri[93] from Hanoar Hatzioni reported that a group learned boxing and judo from "highly respected" Israeli *shlichim*. Some even received regular military training. Mordechay Frankel,[94] a member of Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir, recounted that in 1946, shlichim from the Haganah came to establish a military hachsharah,[95] a three-month seminar for *madrichim* under the guidance of the Haganah.

[92] Taub, interview 42036, segment 99.

[93] Michael Ofri, interview by Naaman Belkind, February 26, 1997, interview 26521, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Israel, segment 127.

[94] Mordechay Frankel, interview by Teuma Beeri, May 4, 1997, interview 31063, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, Kiryat Tivon, Northern, Israel, segments 143-144.

[95] The Haganah was the main Jewish paramilitary organization in Mandatory Palestine between 1920 and 1948.

The Role of the JDC in Financing the *Hachsharot*

The Joint Distribution Committee started its operations in Hungary in March 1945. "[The] JDC had a dual goal from the very beginning. It aimed to support the reintegration of the Jewish community in Hungary but as we can see from the aid distributed to the various Zionist organizations, it also tried to support those who wanted to emigrate."[96] The Jews of Hungary were the biggest recipients of JDC funds among the fifteen European countries supported by the organization.[97]

One of the objectives of the JDC was the productivization of Jews. Therefore, to reach this goal the JDC created the Work and Workshop Organization Department, that was operational from October 1, 1945. One of the department's aims was to employ Jews who could work in industrial and agricultural cooperatives. Within this framework, the JDC provided the primary financial support for the hachsharot in Hungary.[98] It is important to note, however, that the JDC, due to the growing hostility of the regime, as detailed later, constantly tried to present its support "as an attempt by the Joint to promote the integration of the local Jewish community, whose professional profile was perceived to be alien to the needs of the postwar economy and society of Hungary."[99]

In July 1946, the Joint Work and Workshop Organization Department organized an exhibition, which was very interesting also in this respect. The JDC described the event as the presentation of "the work done since the liberation in the field of the productivization of the Jews."[100] The fact that Sándor Rónai, Minister of Cooperatives and Trade, opened the exhibition, and the President of Hungary Zoltán Tildy and his wife visited it, clearly showed the event's significance. However, most notably for our topic, almost none of the many short news reports and longer newspaper articles mentioned Zionism or the fact that many of the workers of these cooperatives were people who wanted to make aliyah.[101] Yet one

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[96] Frojimovics, "JDC Activity in Hungary: 1945–1953," 426.

[97] Ibid., 424.

[98] Novák, *Átmenetben*, 31; Szabó, "Pusztulás és újjászületés," 66.

[99] Kinga Frojimovics, "Different Interpretation of Reconstruction: The AJDC and the WJC in Hungary after the Holocaust" in *The Jews are Coming Back*, ed. David Bankier, (Jerusalem: Berghahn Books and Yad Vashem, 2005), 277-292; 285.

[100] This text appeared in several daily and weekly newspapers.

[101] One of the exceptions: "A dolgozó zsidók kiállítása," *Igazság*, August 3, 1946.

of the photos in the exhibition clearly showed Herzl's famous phrase in Hungarian: "If you want, it's not a fairy tale."[102]

In 1947, the Work and Workshop Organization Department produced a comprehensive and detailed report about agricultural and industrial hachsharot. There were 49 industrial hachsharot in Budapest and 23 in the countryside, with 1,869 halutzim in Budapest and 852 in the countryside. Agricultural hachsharot were operating in 32 places on 2,113 acres[103] with 1,538 halutzim. Even considering the uncertainty of the data for previous years, there is an apparent decline. The main reason for this was the continuous aliyah. However, in addition to that, many hachsharot faced supply shortages.[104] Another important aspect was that the new chairman of the JDC, Israel Gaynor Jacobson, who arrived in Hungary in September 1947, radically changed the JDC support strategy. He wanted to end the dependence of the Jewish masses on JDC subsidies and make them stand on their own feet.[105]

In the Crossfire of the Communists and the Road to the End

After the war, multi-party parliamentary democracy was formed in Hungary. However, already from November 1945 the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Welfare, which are critical to our subject, were under communist control.

The attitude of communists towards Zionism and the Zionist movement was influenced from the beginning by both ideological and "pragmatic" considerations. From as early as the spring and summer of 1945, the Communist Party was highly critical of Zionism and Zionists. This criticism, often characterized by extremely harsh rhetoric, constantly appeared in the Communist press. Zionists were accused of "increas[ing] their masses by terrorizing assimilated

[102] "Kiállítás – A Joint üzemeinek tevékenységét bemutató kiállítás," ID: MTI-FOTO-756329. Accessed September 15, 2022, https://archivum.mtva.hu/photobank/item/MTI-FOTO-OHFocE9yM01VdWVZdTMvdjRxRys4QT09.

[103] It is the type of acre used in Hungary, which is 5,755 square-meter.

[104] Novák, *Átmenetben*, 134-136.

[105] Frojimovics, "Different Interpretation of Reconstruction," 289-290.

Jews who have Hungarian national feelings."[106] Moreover, they distract the Jews from the "joint work" as Hungarian Jews have "one duty, to participate in the productive work and the country's reconstruction with all their strength."[107] The *moshava* in Balatonboglár, mentioned earlier, was also a target of criticism: "In Balatonboglár, children and young people are being given Jewish nationalist training," which "could have unforeseeable and serious consequences" as young people "'trained' in this way will become useless to democracy for years, if not decades."[108]

In the spring of 1946, the Minister of National Welfare, Erik Molnár, formulated a clear and sharp criticism of Zionism. He argued that only the complete assimilation of Jewry could lead to the solution of the Jewish question. He argued that "the effort of Zionism to restore the diminished [Jewish] national consciousness of Hungarian Jewry goes against the direction of Hungarian social development and therefore a reactionary objective."[109]

The first open conflict between the JDC and the Communist Party occurred in July 1945. The Communists accused the JDC of openly supporting the Hungarian Zionist Association. In response, the JDC stated that it was utterly apolitical and supported all Jews, whether Zionist or not. The political control of the JDC became fully apparent when, in March 1946, the previously mentioned Minister of National Welfare, Erik Molnár, delegated the Ministerial Commissioner, Jenő Zeitinger, to the Joint Committee.[110] Zeitinger, in a report at the end of July 1947, among other things, also mentioned the hachsharot:

> It [the JDC] constantly promotes and keeps alive the separation of the Jews of Hungary from the Hungarians. It keeps thousands of young girls and men in 110 retraining camps[111] for the purpose of emigration to Palestine under reactionary leadership. Through its Work and Workshop Organization Department, it finances industrial cooperatives, maintains

[106] Ferenc Hajdu, "Mi történt, amíg távolt voltatok," *Néplap*, June 13, 1945. *Néplap* was the daily newspaper of the East Hungarian district of the Hungarian Communist Party.
[107] Ferenc Hajdu. "Mi történik amióta itthon vagytok," *Néplap*, July 29, 1945.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Erik Molnár, "Zsidókérdés Magyarországon," *Társadalmi Szemle* 1, no. 5 (1946): 326-334; 333.
[110] Frojimovics, "Different Interpretation of Reconstruction," 287.
[111] The report used this expression instead of training camp.

> factories and agricultural collectives, which form a festering sore in the life of democratic Hungary, both in Budapest and in the countryside.[112]

However, the pragmatic reasons mentioned earlier also played a significant role alongside ideological considerations. On the one hand, the JDC had taken a great burden off the Hungarian state by providing vast amounts of financial and material support. On the other hand, it provided Hungary with a considerable amount of hard currency, which it needed enormously. Moreover, the JDC had to use five percent of the funds to support non-Jewish, left-wing, mostly communist organizations.[113]

In the autumn of 1947, the Communist Party through electoral fraud won a majority of the vote followed by a rapid and ruthless complete takeover. After the election, the Zionists came under even greater pressure than before. The anti-Zionist and anti-cosmopolitan campaigns in the Soviet Union also played a role. The campaign against the Zionists, with the active involvement of the Neolog community, ended with the Zionist Association dissolving itself in March 1949.[114] After the 1947 election, the Communists removed and forced the JDC's leader, Frigyes Görög, to emigrate, and he was succeeded in the position by the American Israel Gaynor Jacobson. As mentioned earlier, Jacobson followed an utterly different aid strategy. Although successful in its aims, this strategy was highly counterproductive in the contemporary political situation. It contributed significantly to the integration of Jews into the communist dictatorship. Once this had been achieved, the JDC was no longer needed. Jacobson was arrested in December 1949, interrogated, and expelled from the country on espionage charges. The JDC continued to operate in Hungary for some time, although it had less and less control over the use of its aid. It finally ceased operations in Hungary in early 1953.[115]

Another crucial area for our topic, which the communists heavily influenced from the beginning, was emigration. Immediately after the war, the Ministry of the

[112] László Svéd, "A magyar zsidóság és hatalom 1945–1955," *Múltunk* 5, no. 2-3 (1946): 248-298; 263.
[113] Frojimovics, "Different Interpretation of Reconstruction," 288; Svéd, "A magyar zsidóság és hatalom 1945–1955," 262-263.
[114] Kovács, "Hungarian Jewish Politics from the End of the Second World War until the Collapse of Communism," 131-135.
[115] Frojimovics, "Different Interpretation of Reconstruction," 290-291.

Interior turned a blind eye to border crossings organized by Zionists. However, the legal framework for emigration was constantly narrowed. After 1947 regulations became increasingly more severe. Finally, from 1949 borders were gradually closed, and in April 1950, a 15 km-long frontier strip was created, eliminating the possibility of even illegal border crossing.[116]

Identity Change and Life after the *Hachsharah*

The time spent in the Zionist movement and the hachsharot significantly changed the identity of its members. Margaret Schwartz said: the hachsharah "made me a very big Zionist. So, when I married my husband, I told him that the only country I'm willing to go to is Israel."[117] Unsurprisingly, Zionism and Israel became a priority for our interviewees. As Naomi Amsel said: "There is no other place for the Jews, only Eretz Israel."[118] Irene Adler reported that when the War of Independence broke out, she almost decided not to make aliyah. But then she said to herself: "I want to go to Israel, because of just the principle of it. I said, nobody can ever hurt me. We have to have someplace where we can go!".[119] Many of our interviewees mentioned how important it was for them to fight, to do something for the country. Michael Ofri summed up this feeling as follows: "A dream came true when I arrived in Israel. We did not want anything else, just to contribute."[120] As mentioned before, eighty-seven of our interviewees lived in Israel, six in the USA, three in Australia and Hungary, and two in Australia at the time of the interview. Only four of those not living in Israel did not make aliyah. Two of them stayed in Hungary, one emigrated to the USA and one to Australia. Ten interviewees eventually settled in another country after making aliyah, most of them in the second half of the 1950s or early 1960s. In most cases, they had a close

[116] Barna, "Hungarian Jewish Holocaust Survivors Registered in Displaced Persons Camps in Apulia," 167-169.
[117] Margaret Schwartz, interview by Leonie Szabo, September 10, 1996, interview 19774, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, Caulfield, Victoria, Australia, segment 46.
[118] Naomi Amsel, interview by Haya Goldberg, July 17, 1997, interview 32981, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, Nir Galim, D.N. Evtah, Central, Israel, segment 174.
[119] Adler, interview 2896, segment 131.
[120] Ofri, interview 26521, segment 132.

family member, parent, or sibling living in the other country, which was the reason why they decided to leave Israel.

After arriving in Israel, almost all the interviewees were placed in a kibbutz after staying for a short while in so-called immigrant camps. There were three groups: (1) those who immediately felt it was not for them and left, who were not many; (2) those who stayed for a while but then started living independently; and (3) those who were still living in a kibbutz or *moshav* at the time of the interview. About one-third of the interviewees from Israel (30 persons) belonged to this third group. After arriving in Israel, the men joined the army and fought in the War of Independence. Women usually cleaned or worked in the kitchen. However, those girls who did not want to go to kibbutz had the opportunity to join the army. For example, Aviva Porat said: "Upon my arrival in Israel, I joined the army at the age of 16. [...] I was not that *olah chadasha*[121] working in the kitchen or cleaning that most of them were."[122]

Differences between the *sabras*[123] already living in the kibbutz and the immigrant survivors of the Holocaust were manifold. There were differences in age and family status: kibbutz members were generally older and had families. Moreover, there were also many differences in the financial situation and opportunities of the two groups. In the *kibutzim*, the redistribution of wealth could not take place with the arrival of new members, who had no possessions, and many felt that they were forced to make unwanted sacrifices because of the new members. The situation for newcomers was further complicated by language difficulties. But the most painful thing for newcomers was that many felt that, after the unimaginable ordeal of the Holocaust, they had arrived in a place where they were not welcome. Their expectation of finding the social atmosphere they longed for was not fulfilled in reality. Instead of a warm and friendly environment, a feeling of home and belonging, they encountered "boorish behavior" and "waves of bitterness against immigration from Hungary."[124] As the immigrant Itzhak Vaslo wrote in the Yagur journal on March 18, 1948: "I hope that these waves of bitterness against

[121] Meaning: new immigrant.

[122] Aviva Porat, interview by Moshe Granot, June 11, 1996, interview 16415, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, Haifa, Haifa, Israel, segment 79.

[123] Jews who were born in Israel or Mandatory Palestine before May 1948.

[124] Hanna Yablonka, *Survivors of the Holocaust* (London: Macmillan, 1999), 178-185.

immigration from Hungary will abate and then we will experience once again that most important feeling to a Jew – in these days – *the feeling of home* [original emphasis]."[125]

Among our interviewees, there were several cases when groups left their initial kibbutz together to form a new one—the reasons for leaving varied. Yisrael Feld[126] felt that the sabras wanted to control them too much. Zeev Kohn[127] thought that the kibbutz members were too old for him. Shmuel Santo felt that he was looked down on by the kibbutz residents: "My Hebrew and accent ridiculed me; I suffered a lot there."[128] Tova Tishler said that her "[e]xpectations were very high, which didn't meet the reality."[129]

Another critical aspect of the encounter with Israeli society, with the sabras, was that survivors had lived through the Holocaust what the sabras not only did not experience but could not even imagine. For some interviewees being a survivor of the Holocaust was taboo: they did not want to talk about it, not even in the family. They tried to "overcome" what happened to them. Some survivors thought there was no point in telling what had happened to someone who was not there, and quite often, even the survivors themselves could not understand how it could have happened to them. Meir Lantos said the following: "After the Holocaust, we were in shock. We did not know what to tell. [...] There was no point talking about it."[130] However, some people did try to talk, but people did not believe them. Nili Kochva reported such an experience: "This is one of the most painful things, that they didn't really believe in our stories in Israel. They thought we were coloring the stories, adding some spice to them."[131]

Some were ashamed of themselves, and for many of them, the Eichmann trial in 1961 put an end to this shame. Yisrael Feld said the following: "I was ashamed of the leaders; I was ashamed of ourselves. And then I came to Israel and was enlisted

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[125] Ibid., 178.

[126] Yisrael Feld, interview by Nurit Zer, September 30, 1997, interview 35269, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, Kibbutz Nir Galim, D.N. Evtah, Central, Israel, segment 228.

[127] Kohn, interview 21815, segment 108.

[128] Santo, interview 26379, segment 63.

[129] Tova Tishler, interview by Yitzchak Hadas, August 27, 1996, interview 19391, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, Kfar Saba, Central, Israel, segment 150.

[130] Meir Lantos, interview by Eva Weintraub, October 8, 1997, interview 34381, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, Ramat Aviv, Tel Aviv, Tel Aviv, Israel, segments 108-109.

[131] Kochva, interview 47710, segment 147.

and got a weapon, and I saw that we defeated the Arabs in the war. So, I asked myself. Where were we then? How did we get into this situation that we were like sheep in a slaughterhouse? There was a general awakening after the Eichmann trial. Then it turned out how thoroughly planned it was and the whole mechanism."[132] Many then began to speak, as Esther-Magda Ungar did: "After the Eichmann trial, I heard many details that I did not know about. Then it was the first time I started to talk to my daughter about everything, about my family, the home, the Shabbats."[133]

Conclusion

After the Holocaust, the remaining Jews in Hungary faced a severe choice: stay in Hungary and continue assimilating or dissimilate and leave the country. The majority of the surviving Jews were already highly assimilated, and additional factors favored further assimilation. Therefore, the majority of Hungarian Jews opted for staying. Scholarly works on post-Holocaust Jewry, cited several times in this paper, have focused mainly on this majority.

This paper deals with the minority who chose dissimilation and, in most cases, eventually emigrated. The central aim of our study was to examine the under-researched topic of hachsharot operating in Hungary right after the Holocaust. Exploring the functioning of these institutions brings us closer to understanding the immediate postwar history of the Hungarian Zionist movement. However, we wanted to tell the stories of these institutions through their members' voices. Therefore, we conducted a systematic analysis of one-hundred-and-one interviews from the USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive. Thus, our study contributes to the existing literature by making the hachsharot the main topic of its research, and moreover, by addressing it from a personal perspective. The use of oral testimonies has allowed us to explore the background to the hachsharah members' identity choices, their Zionist attachment, motivations, and the impact that the time spent in the hachsharot had on their later lives. We consider this

[132] Feld, interview 35269, segments 245-246.
[133] Ungar, interview 42442, segment 170.

paper a starting point. Many other aspects of the topic remain to be investigated. For example, hachsharot of Hungarian Jews in the neighboring countries, Hungarian Jewish hachsharah members' journey to Palestine or Israel, or Hungarian Jews in DP camps' hachsharot.

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Keywords: Hungary, Hachsharot, Zionism, Structured Analysis of Interviews, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive

How to quote this article:
Ildikó Barna and Kinga Szemere, "*Hachsharot* in Hungary after the Holocaust: lives and stories behind facts," in "Training for *Aliyah*: Young Jews in *Hachsharot* across Europe between the 1930s and late 1940s," eds. Verena Buser and Chiara Renzo, *Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History. Journal of the Fondazione CDEC* 21, no. 1 (2022), DOI: 10.48248/issn.2037-741X/ 13308

Sasha R. Goldstein-Sabbah, *Baghdadi Jewish Networks in the Age of Nationalism* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), pp. 270.

by *Esther Meir-Glitzenstein*

> The Iraqi Jews' way of life is an Arab way of life... The language of every Jew in Iraq is Arabic... Alongside this linguistic assimilation, which does not allow for any difference between Jews and Arabs, there is cultural assimilation... This Jew walks along the Tigris River, goes sailing on a boat, bathes in the Tigris just like an Arab; he lives in this place; he built a home in this place; he curses in Arabic, speaks in Arabic, sings in Arabic, has an Arab way of life; he is rooted in this place and it would be hard for him to go elsewhere; he is tied to the place.[1]

These remarks on the identity of Iraqi Jews formed part of a presentation to the Zionist leadership in Palestine. The speaker was Enzo Sereni, a Zionist emissary sent in the spring of 1942 to Baghdad, where he soon established a vast Zionist network that operated for a decade, until most of Iraq's Jewry immigrated to Israel.

The "Arabness" described by Sereni had negative connotations in the State of Israel, not only because it was perceived as embodying the language and culture of the enemy, but also because it was ascribed a range of negative characteristics, including lack of modern education, lack of modern culture, a poor sense of hygiene, ignorance, backwardness, superstition, and prejudice, all of which derived from condescending Orientalist perceptions. The manifestations of these perceptions were offensive and hurtful, as young immigrants who came from Iraq in the pursuit of Zionist ideals reported, with pain and disappointment: "Arabs, ignoramuses, blacks, have you ever seen a movie in your lives? Eaten with a fork?" "Have you had a shower? You look like Arabs," and the like.[2]

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[1] Enzo Sereni, Remarks before the Aliyah Bet Committee, 2 July 1942, Haganah Archives, Tel Aviv.
[2] Esther Meir-Glitzenstein, ' "Here They Eat with a Knife and a Fork'– East and West in the Inter-cultural Encounter in the State of Israel," in *Iyunim Bitkumat Israel: Society and Economy in Israel: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, eds. A. Barely. D. Gutwein and T. Friling (Shed Boker: The Ben-Gurion Research Institute - Yad Ben-Zvi, 2005), 615-644 [Hebrew].

At the same time, the Zionist outlook did not regard these Jews' Arabness as an inherent quality, but as an acquired identity, the product of 1,300 years of life under the auspices of Islam and Arab culture. To "purify" Jews of their Arab qualities, the Zionist movement disparaged the preservation of these qualities and rejected any expression of Arab culture or longing for the "Arab" past, with food and folklore the only exceptions to these prohibitions. The pressure bore fruit and its repercussions are starkly evident today, as the descendants of immigrants from Islamic countries do not speak Arabic and know almost nothing about their families' past. Notably, this cultural erasure is not solely an Israeli phenomenon. Even in other destination countries, where Jewish immigrants from Iraq did not experience such an intense "cultural steamroller," the local language, usually English, and the local culture still took over, while the unique characteristics from their country of origin steadily diminished and sometimes even disappeared.
The Arab identity of Jews from Islamic countries, which only became a field of academic research in recent decades, addresses both the cultural implications and the ethnic and national implications of Jewish-Arab identity. The characteristics of Iraqi Jews have a central place in the discussion of this complex identity.

A Look at the History and Identity of Baghdad's Jews

Shortly after immigrating to Israel, Iraqi Jews began documenting the final decades of their community's history in Iraq. The first writers appeared in the 1960s, producing studies that portrayed a minority community with cultural autonomy that had preserved its unique Jewish identity over the course of its long history, and whose ties with the Muslim world were confined to the economic sphere, while ties with the government were managed by its religious and economic elite. These writers placed special emphasis on the Jews' modernity, which in their view stemmed from the influence of European education and constituted a central factor in the life of Iraqi Jews. A substantial portion of the research was devoted to biographies of prominent figures in the community and individuals who had emigrated to India, China and Europe, where they

flourished.[3] Of particular note are the studies by Avraham Ben-Yaakov, who compiled a vast amount of records and papers documenting the history of Iraqi Jews in recent generations.[4]

In the 1990s there began to appear historical studies focused on distinct groups within Iraqi-Jewish society in various political contexts. The first of these address the economic and political elite of the Jewish community and its ideological outlook, dubbed "the Iraqi orientation."[5] Other studies focused on Zionist activities during the 1920s and subsequently in the 1940s.[6]

Soon thereafter the scholarship on Iraqi Jews shifted its focus from the political to the cultural, with the Arab identity of Jews at the centre of discourse. It was cultural researcher Ella Shohat who first discussed the term "Arab-Jew" and its implications, in the aftermath of Edward Said's *Orientalism*.[7] She raised the issue in a formative 1988 article titled "Sephardim in Israel: Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Jewish Victims."[8] Her article positioned Zionism within the framework of the European colonial project and presented Jews as native Arabs in Arab countries and in Israel. Viewing this approach from a historical perspective, I will note that Shohat detached the history of the Jews of Arab countries from its historical and geographical context, subordinating it to the Palestinian narrative of the Zionist-Palestinian conflict. Yet despite the problematic aspect of this approach, the "Arab-Jew" became, henceforth, a matter of debate and a charged issue for both proponents and opponents, who focused on the significance of this identity not only in the past, in Iraq, but also in the present, even though Iraq has

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[3] Abraham Twena, *Dispersion and Liberation: Jewish Autonomy in Iraq* (Ramla: Geula Synagogue Committee, 1979), 9-14 [Hebrew]; Nir Shohet, *The story of a Diaspora: Chapters in the history of Babylonian Jewry through the ages* (Jerusalem: Association of Jewish Academics from Iraq, 1981) [Hebrew]; Nissim Rejwan, *The Jews of Iraq: 3000 Years of History and Culture* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1985).

[4] Avraham Ben-Ya'akov, *The Jews of Babylon: From the End of the Geonim's Period to the Present, 1038-1960* (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 1965) [Hebrew].

[5] Nissim Kazzaz, *The Jews in Iraq in the Twentieth Century* (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1991) [Hebrew].

[6] Hayyim Cohen, The Zionist Activity in Iraq, Jerusalem, 1969 [Hebrew]; Esther Meir-Glitzenstein, *Zionism in an Arab Country: Jews in Iraq in the 1940s* (London - New York: Routledge, 2004).

[7] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books - Random House, 1979).

[8] Ella Shohat, "Sephardim in Israel: Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Jewish Victims," *Social Text* 19/20 (1988): 1-35.

been cleared of its Jews and most of their descendants reside in Israel today, with a minority in England and North America.

In addition to the issue's cultural context, analyses have addressed its ethnic and national context as well. From this point forward one would be hard-pressed to find a study on the Jews of Islamic countries that does not address the issue of the Arab-Jew. As a consequence, research on the modern literature of Iraqi Jews has flourished. Reuven Snir studied the intellectuals who identified with the Iraqi state and operated alongside the community's leadership. Delving deeper, he also explored the literature they produced, with attention to this elite's identity and the transformations it underwent over the years.[9] As part of her research on the Iraqi intelligentsia under the Hashemite kingdom, and as an extension of what she termed the "other Iraq," Orit Bashkin expanded the research on Jewish intellectuals and the political activities of Jewish communists.[10] Lital Levy focused her research on the phenomenon of the Arab-Jew in literature and the press,[11] and Jonathan Sciarcon examined the issue in the context of the modern education system provided by the Alliance Israélite Universelle through its girls' schools in Iraq.[12] *Baghdad, Yesterday*, an autobiography by Arab literature scholar Sasson Somekh, who was born in Baghdad and immigrated to Israel in the 1950s, made a significant and formative contribution to research on Jewish-Arab identity.[13]

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[9] Reuven Snir, *Who needs Arab-Jewish identity? Interpellation, exclusion, and inessential solidarities* (Leiden - Boston: Brill, 2015).

[10] Orit Bashkin, *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012).

[11] Lital Levy, "Historicizing the Concept of Arab Jews in the Mashriq," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 98, no. 4 (2008): 452-469.

[12] Yehuda Shenhav, *The Arab Jews: A Postcolonial Reading of Nationalism, Religion, and Ethnicity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006); Jonathan Sciarcon, *Educational Oases in the Desert: The Alliance Israelite Universelle's Girls Schools in Ottoman Iraq, 1895-1915* (Albany: SUNY, 2017).

[13] Sasson Somekh, *Baghdad, Yesterday: The Making of an Arab Jew* (Jerusalem: Ibis Editions, 2007).

A Comprehensive Look at the Transnational Networks of Iraqi Jews

All the above studies, and the range of topics, issues, and questions they raise, provide a foundation for Sasha Goldstein-Sabbah's fascinating and innovative study, *Baghdadi Jewish Networks in the Age of Nationalism*. In this study she presents another layer of this history, on the one hand expanding our knowledge of the Jewish community in Iraq, while on the other hand shedding new light on what we know about the processes this community underwent during the last two centuries of its existence. The study is unique in that its heroes are not prominent figures, cultural associations, or political ideologies, but rather transnational networks that Iraqi Jews established or integrated into, which had a decisive impact on shaping their character and identity. These networks emerge from historical documents housed in various archives of the "Baghdadis"—Iraqi Jews who emigrated to Southeast Asia—and the archives of Jewish philanthropies founded in Western countries that operated in Iraq.

Methodologically, the author draws on transnational theories, using them to highlight new perspectives and insights derived from studies on global migration processes. Employing these theories, she examines migration processes and transformations among Baghdad's Jews during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Throughout the book she describes networks of contacts across vast geographic areas and diverse cultures, thereby linking "Europe" and the "other" world while positioning the "other" at the centre of the discussion. By revealing global economic and cultural connections and examining their implications for the culture and identity of Iraqi Jews, this new layer of research expands our knowledge base and facilitates deeper and better-founded analysis of the processes and changes that Iraqi Jews have undergone in modern times.

Three transnational networks occupy centre stage in this study: the trade network that linked Iraqi Jews with the Baghdadi diaspora in India and its satellite communities in Southeast Asia and England; the media network that linked Iraqi Jews, by way of the Jewish press, with the modern Jewish culture that emerged in Europe during the nineteenth century; and the network of contacts with Jewish philanthropies in Europe and the United States, which operated transnationally and not only provided political and material aid but also brought a modern Jewish education system, a new set of values, and secular ideas to Islamic countries.

The first transnational network that Goldstein-Sabbah describes is the trade diaspora that Jewish emigrants from Baghdad established in the major cities of colonial India: Bombay (Mumbai today), Calcutta (Kolkata), and Pune, with outposts in the major trade cities of the Far East, including Shanghai, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Rangoon, among others. These ties were not limited to the Far East, as the network was linked to industrial and trade centres in the metropole, and migrants also established smaller outposts in major cities in England, particularly Manchester and London. In terms of trade, this network linked three geographical areas: England in the West, Baghdad and surrounding areas, including Persia and the Persian Gulf; and Far Eastern countries, including India, China, and Burma, among others.

The Baghdadi diaspora in the East developed by means of a gradual and continuous migration, beginning in the early nineteenth century. In most cases the migration was driven by economic motives, as people sought new opportunities created by Britain's expanding spheres of influence in the Far East. In this sense it differed from other waves of Jewish migration at the time, particularly the mass migration from Central and Eastern Europe to the Americas, which was driven by economic hardship and political persecution. That difference also manifested in the characteristics of this migration: whereas entire families emigrated from Eastern Europe and only a few returned, the migration from Iraq primarily comprised individuals, usually men, who travelled back and forth and eventually resettled in Iraq while maintaining trade relations with Baghdadis in the Far East. Only a few relocated their families and settled permanently in India.

This migration gave rise to a transnational Baghdadi elite headed by a number of wealthy families, the most prominent of whom included the Sassoon, Kadoorie, Ezra, Elias, Yehuda and Gabay families. These families numbered among the economic and political elite of the Jewish community in Baghdad, and after emigrating they maintained close ties with their original communities through relatives and commerce agents in Baghdad. They encouraged young, educated members of the middle class to emigrate so as to integrate them into commerce, and they brought teachers, cantors, scholars, and butchers to serve the new small Baghdadi communities. From these migrants' perspective, India was a "diaspora of hope." In time the magnate David Sassoon established a school in Bombay where young members of the Baghdadi community studied Torah, Hebrew,

English, and Hindi, and a significant portion of the graduates integrated into the Jewish capitalists' financial networks.

The small communities that formed around the wealthy Baghdadi families included not only the emigrants from Baghdad but also Jewish emigrants from Syria and Lebanon, Egypt, Yemen, Persia, and Afghanistan. This social milieu gave rise to a fluid cultural mix that preserved common or closely related cultural values and religious rituals, while blurring the original geographic identity and embracing all the emigrants who constituted the community of "Baghdadis." By the mid-twentieth century members of the community numbered 13-15,000—the equivalent in size of about one-tenth of the community in Iraq, which numbered 130,000 Jews at that time.

Although the Baghdadis in India formed an economic and social elite based on trade and transnational ties, and despite their direct ties with the British colonial centres in India and Britain, as a diaspora they remained intimately connected to their original community in Baghdad, which served as a religious authority, issuing rulings and decisions on matters of religion and custom. Baghdad was their "second Jerusalem"—symbolizing a glorious past but also serving an important function with respect to their particular status as Jewish emigrants in the East. Because the colonial value system classified population groups by racial criteria, the European settlers refrained from mixing with the Baghdadis, viewing them as akin to natives, whereas the Baghdadis looked down on India's local Jews, the Jews of Cochin and Bene Israel, regarding them as dark-skinned natives. Thus, they could not integrate into the European settler community and did not want to integrate into local Jewish communities. Given these sensitivities, their connection with Baghdad played an important role because it preserved them as a separate, non-black and non-native, community. A cornerstone of the Baghdadis' unique identity was their Jewish past in Iraq, and as such they maintained a religious lifestyle, religious rituals, ancient traditions, and community cohesiveness. Baghdad remained their homeland, and Baghdad's rabbis remained their primary religious authority. Accordingly, during the nineteenth century Baghdad's foremost rabbis, Rabbi Abdallah Somekh and Rabbi Yosef Hayyim, were called upon to provide solutions under Halachah (Jewish law) to problems that modernity posed to Baghdadis in India, decades before these problems became relevant to Jews in Iraq. Questions related to observing the Sabbath in light of the

need to travel by train or carry objects within or beyond the Sabbath domain, the need to exchange money on the Sabbath for international trade purposes, and other questions of this nature necessitated answers from the rabbis of Baghdad. In most cases the Baghdadis received lenient rulings, indicating that Baghdad's rabbis were acquainted with the global economic reality rather than disconnected from it. In fact, Baghdad's rabbis themselves participated in family trade businesses and had ties to Baghdadi trade networks in the East. Their rulings reveal a unique religious approach to modernity, one that did not fear assimilation and was willing to accommodate changes in light of economic changes and social sensitivities.

Thus, in addition to providing an attractive emigration destination, India paved the way to modernity for the Jews of Iraq. Relations with the Baghdadis contributed significantly to transformations in Iraq's Jewish community. Some of these relations were of a personal nature: Jewish pilgrims travelled from the East to Babylon to visit tombs of the holy prophets in their country of origin, and many came in order to find wives, while young Jews from Baghdad who had received a modern education and were having trouble finding suitable employment made their way to the East. Their success turned them into role models. The main impact, however, stemmed from philanthropic relations. Wealthy Baghdadis provided an important source of funding for the establishment of modern educational institutions, religious institutions, and hospitals, as well as relief and welfare programs for poor members of Iraq's Jewish communities. The Menashi Yeshiva, which provided the foundation for the renowned Bet Zilkha Yeshiva, was founded in Baghdad in the 1840s with the assistance and financial backing of wealthy members of the satellite community in India; many of the Alliance schools' permanent structures were built with donations from the Sassoon and Kadoorie families (the Albert Sassoon Boys' School, the Laura Kadoorie Girls' School), and it was they who funded a significant portion of the school budgets. Likewise, the Reema Kadoorie Eye Clinic, within the Meir Elias Hospital, was established through a donation from Elly Kadoorie. The Baghdadis provided funds for the absorption of impoverished Jewish immigrants who flowed into Baghdad from Kurdistan and Persia throughout the nineteenth century, and in addition to financial support they remained involved in the life of their community of origin, voicing opinions on matters of religion, education, society, and organization. Thanks to them, the Jews of Baghdad were exposed to

modernization trends even before those trends had a real impact on Baghdad itself, and in time it would become evident that this gave the Jewish community a significant advantage over their surrounding environment.

Another transnational network that had an impact on the Jews of Baghdad was the Jewish press of the Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment), which produced newspapers in Europe and Palestine that also reached Jewish subscribers in Baghdad: *HaMagid*, *HaTzfirah*, and *HaHavatzelet*, among others. Iraqi Jews could read them because Hebrew, as the holy tongue, was familiar to them.

Goldstein-Sabbah describes the influence this network had on Iraqi Jews, through the dissemination of ideas from the European Enlightenment and the revival of Hebrew culture. Thanks to the ties between Baghdad and the Baghdadi diaspora, press operations expanded as India offered more convenient opportunities to establish printing presses, and it soon became the centre of the Baghdadi press, linking Baghdadis across the Indian Ocean. Between the years 1856 and 1960, fourteen newspapers were published in Bombay, Calcutta, Shanghai, and Singapore collectively. These were weeklies and monthlies, mainly in Judeo-Arabic, with a minority in Hebrew and English. Some produced only a few issues while others were published over the course of many years. The best-known publishers were Shlomo Bekhor Hutsin and Shlomo Twena, who, in addition to newspapers, also published religious and secular literature. In addition, European and Baghdadi media networks maintained reciprocal relations, guided by Jewish intellectuals in Baghdad and India: Baghdadi writers published articles about events in Baghdad and its surroundings in the Jewish press, while gathering news items about European Jews from that press and publishing them in their own newspapers.

The third network on which Goldstein-Sabbah focuses is that of education. The first modern school to open in Baghdad was founded in 1864 by the Paris-based Alliance Israélite Universelle. It was not a European initiative, but a response by this philanthropic organization to an initiative that originated within the community itself. Henceforth Baghdad's Jews had direct, ongoing, and binding relations with a transnational educational network that disseminated the culture of the European Enlightenment and expanded the circle of educated Jews in Baghdad. Yet while the press network operated in Hebrew, the educational network operated in French and, later, in English as well. Having European

languages taught by educators from abroad, in combination with a modern curriculum, enhanced young Jews' ability to develop trade relations with the Baghdadi diaspora, and this trend grew stronger after the British conquest of Iraq during World War I and the establishment of the Iraqi state under the auspices of a British mandate.

In the 1920s the community expanded its education system, admitting greater numbers of boys and girls, provided Jewish officials for the local administration, and experienced significant growth of the Jewish middle class. During those years Jews' status also underwent a substantial transformation after they were granted civil rights and included as individuals in the Iraqi national system. The Jewish community cooperated fully in this process. Its leadership took part in founding the new state, and Jewish intellectuals made an important contribution to the cultural bloom in Arabic. Literary Arabic, as Iraq's national language, became the language of instruction in Jewish schools, and the education provided by these institutions became a tool to instill a national ideology, while pushing French and Hebrew aside.

Things took a different course in the mid-1930s, with the rise of nationalists who questioned whether Jews were part of the national community. A review of the transnational networks and their influence reveals that, in the age of nationalism, Jews' ties with these networks, which had long benefited them economically and socially, now became a disadvantage. The national crisis eventually came to an end with the emigration of most Iraqi Jews in the early 1950s. Yet this process also revealed another aspect of the networks' impact: their modern education, knowledge of foreign languages, and ability to operate within a modern cultural and social system would help emigrating Iraqi Jews integrate quickly into their destination countries.

Transnational Networks and Identity

The influence of transnational networks, which Goldstein-Sabbah describes and analyses so well, brings us back to the question of identity: What was the identity of Baghdad's Jews? The author chose to examine this issue by discussing the languages that Iraqi Jews used and the cultural spaces in which they operated,

within the context of the influence of transnational networks. The study shows that under Ottoman rule, during the final centuries in which they resided as a religious community within a Muslim space, the Jews of Baghdad preserved the Jewish-Arabic language, a dialect that enabled them to be part of the Arab world while remaining socially distinct from Muslims and Christians. Alongside Judeo-Arabic, the men maintained a knowledge of Hebrew as a language of prayer and religious study. Their transnational relations prompted Baghdad's Jews to study French and English, and thanks to these languages they began operating within the European cultural arena in the context of their transnational networks. Their knowledge of Hebrew also turned out to be a transnational factor, exposing Iraqi Jews to the European Jewish Enlightenment. The study finds that European languages and values, particularly Enlightenment values and secularization trends, reached Baghdad from the two directions of their transnational ties, East and West, and none of these influences were imposed on Baghdad's Jews. Rather, Jews adopted them selectively on the basis of deliberation, clarification, and informed choice. Only towards the end of the nineteenth century did Iraqi Jews begin to adopt literary Arabic, which, after the establishment of the Iraqi state in the 1920s, became the common language of all Iraq's residents. For Iraqi Jews this period lasted about fifty years, until their emigration from Iraq. Interestingly, it was during these years that the Baghdad community and the Baghdadi diaspora separated linguistically: while literary Arabic became dominant in Baghdad, English became dominant in the Baghdadi diaspora. In both arenas, however, Judeo-Arabic remained the vernacular language within the community and the family and Hebrew was preserved as a sacred language.

In sum, Goldstein-Sabbah's study demonstrates the tremendous importance of re-examining and re-analysing information about the Jewish community in Iraq in light of new sources. Of particular importance is the insight that Iraqi Jewry was not a closed community within the Muslim arena whose brethren, the Jews of Western countries, introduced them to modernity. On the contrary, this was evidently a dynamic community that absorbed immigrants while also creating satellite communities in other countries; it had a mobile elite that took part in a transnational network spanning vast geographical regions, and this elite operated in colonial frameworks as well as the centre of the metropole in Western Europe. All these developments shaped a community with a unique identity that preserved

its Jewish-Arabic language, assimilated linguistically diverse Jewish immigrants, and in its final decades in Iraq adopted classical Arabic as a language of study and creation. Yet even then it preserved its unique dialect—the Jewish-Arabic language. There is no doubt that these findings necessitate a re-examination of the history of Iraqi Jews and the question of Jewish identity in Iraq.

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How to quote this article:
Esther Meir-Glitzenstein, discussion of *Baghdadi Jewish Networks in the Age of Nationalism,* by Sasha R. Goldstein-Sabbah, *Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History. Journal of the Fondazione CDEC* 21, no. 1 (2022), DOI: 10.48248/issn.2037–741X/13364

Sasha R. Goldstein-Sabbah, *Baghdadi Jewish Networks in the Age of Nationalism* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), pp. 270.

by *Marcella Simoni*

This volume tells the history of the Jews of Baghdad in the nineteenth and early twentieth century—"the age of nationalism"—when communal life and politics in Baghdad were reshaped by the effects of multiple modernizing influences in religious and secular culture: language, administration, economy and politics, and nationalism. From a political and administrative perspective, this period saw the reforms of the *Tanzimat* and the appointment of Midhat Pasha as governor in 1869, followed by the establishment of a British mandate (1920-1932) and, later, the birth of the Kingdom of Iraq (1932). Considering Jewish culture, this period witnessed the adoption and adaptation of the ideals of the *Haskalah* to the linguistic and religious context of Jewish Baghdad. From the point of view of Jewish organized life, the Lay Council of the community of Baghdad became the new body regulating communal life in its many aspects. Considering education, this period saw the growing influence of foreign Jewish institutions in Baghdad, like the Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU), the Anglo-Jewish Association (AJA) and, to a lesser extent, of the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC).

In this scenery of change, the main characters of this history are not so much the individuals, the families, and the Jewish community of Baghdad *per se*; rather, this work focuses on their administrative, cultural, and political transformation as a result of the impact of these modernizing forces, as well as on the web of relations that they developed looking Westwards—towards England, France, and the US—and Eastwards, towards the communities of Baghdadi Jews (from Iraq and the broader Middle East) in India, Singapore, Burma (Myanmar), China and Japan, that the author defines "satellite communities." Here, thousands of Baghdadis (see Appendix B, pp. 224-225 for population estimates) had started to settle from the mid-eighteenth century, growing into more structured communities in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. By identifying them as satellite communities, the author sees their history in relation to that of the community of Baghdad and Iraq, and considers the role they played in making the latter more globalized and secularized in the years that saw "the height of the Jewish participation to the Iraqi

state," and the beginning of the country's political instability. This would then culminate in the mass migration of over 100,000 Iraqi Jews between 1949 and 1952 (p. 2).

Given the wealth of primary sources that the author has used in this research, my review of her work starts from them.

Primary Sources

Originally a Ph.D. thesis defended at the University of Leiden in 2019, this volume is based on a large body of primary documentary, printed and oral sources, memoirs, and of secondary literature. Primary sources show the breadth of the thematic and geographic coverage of this volume. Jews in Iraq are placed at the center of a web of Jewish and non-Jewish contacts, commercial networks and cultural transformations that occurred through collaborations with associations and agencies located in London, Paris and New York on the one hand, and in various Asian cities on the other; therefore, evidence for these relations was looked for—and found—in archives of different types in various locations worldwide. Sources from institutional archives come from the UK National Archives at Kew for Colonial and Foreign office files, and from the British Library for materials from the India Office; from the National Archives of Singapore, that hold an important oral history collection (which is in part available online), while the papers of David Marshall (born David Saul Meshal, who became Singapore's first Prime Minister in 1955) were studied at the "Ysof Ishak Institute" (ISEAS) at the University of Singapore. The author also explored systematically the archives of the AIU, the AJA and the JDC, and of the Jewish Welfare Board of Singapore. Sources from these archives speak of the long-term impact that these Western Jewish associations had in Baghdad between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries from an administrative and educational point of view, for example. The Israel National Library gave access to some of the Sassoon papers (that were still only partially catalogued at the time of this research), while the "Hong Kong Heritage Project—Kaadorie Archives" provided ample material to draw individual or family portraits (in this case of members of the Kadoorie family, and of their multi-layered relations with the Jewish community of Baghdad and

institutional actors in the UK and in Iraq itself). More limited reference is also made to the so-called Iraqi-Jewish archive, a large set of more than 10,000 documents that, since their accidental recovery by the US armed forces in the flooded basement of the Iraqi intelligence headquarters in Baghdad in 2003, has undergone a process of restoration and exhibition in the US, to be later returned to Iraq after digitalization.[1] The author has also made use of printed sources from the Jewish press of Baghdad, from that of the so-called satellite communities, as well as of some issues of Jewish periodicals from London (*The Jewish Chronicle*) and Paris (*Paix et Droit* and the *Bullettin de l'Alliance*). These were used in this work to complement other primary sources: in Baghdad alone, in 1934, the Foreign Office had counted subscribers to sixteen foreign newspapers. Of these "eight were in Hebrew, five in English, one was in Arabic, French and Hebrew and one was in Yiddish" (pp. 14-15 and p. 187). As table n. 1 shows (p. 93), between 1856 and 1940 in India alone the Baghdadi communities (Bombay and Calcutta) published twelve Jewish newspapers in Judeo-Arabic, English and Hebrew; and even though not all of them were published at the same time, this number remains a remarkable indicator of the existence of a very lively cultural life and of a transnational Baghdadi public sphere. Since 1904 the voice of the Baghdadis in Shanghai could be heard through the *Israel's Messenger*, and that of those in Singapore came from *The Israelight*. It is to this press, published in the in the Asian context, that the Jewish community of Baghdad turned for news and debate after the mid-1930s, when censorship at home became increasingly stringent, especially on politically sensitive topics, like Zionism. Zvi Yehuda had already made this point, which the author of this volume also shares and develops through various examples.[2]

[1] *Preserving the Iraqi Jewish Archive*, https://ijarchive.org/, Accessed April 17, 2022.

[2] Zvi Yehuda, *The New Babylonian Diaspora: The Rise and Fall of the Jewish Community in Iraq, 16th-20th Centuries C.E.* (Leiden: Brill, 2017); Yehuda, "Jewish press in India in Baghdadi Judeo-Arabic as an indispensable source for the history of Iraqi Jews in the nineteenth century," in *The Baghdadi Jews in India*: *Maintaining Communities, Negotiating Identities and Creating Super-Diversity*, ed. Shalva Weil (London, New York: Routledge, 2019), 145-162.

Historiography

The broader picture that emerges from this book carries historiographical significance, in reference to at least three contexts: first, when compared to previous histories of the Jews of Iraq (from which this volume in part also draws); second, as to the placement of these histories within a Zionist or anti-Zionist historiography; third, when considering the relations of Jews from Iraq with Baghdadis in the Asian context. I will address the latter point—which is analyzed here in chapter two and partly in chapter five—in a separate and final paragraph.
This volume is indeed different from the existing literature on the Jews of Iraq because it is built on the notion of relations and networks, while previous works have analyzed the history of this community mainly by looking at the cultural, social and political dynamics within the community itself and with broader Iraqi society.[3] As a result, it challenges and deconstructs the binary historiographical debate that has placed the history of the Jews of Iraq within a Zionist or anti-Zionist perspective. The former has explored "a community that had ceased to exist due to the mass migration of Iraqi Jews, primarily to the state of Israel" (pp. 4-5), downplaying the Jewish participation in the Iraqi public sphere and depicting immigration to Israel as caused by anti-Jewish persecution and a combination of religious messianism and adherence to Zionism. The latter perspective, on the other hand, has overemphasized Iraqi Jews' self-identification as Arabs and the limited success of Zionism among them. With a different critical intent, these themes have already been explored for Iraq also by authors like Ella Shohat, for example, and by Yehouda Shenhav.[4] By placing her narrative outside this consolidated polarization, as also Esther Meir Glizenstein and Orit Bashkin have done before her,[5] Goldstein-Sabbah adopts a more complex approach in which

[3] Orit Bashkin, *The Other Iraq: Pluralism and Culture in Hashemite Iraq* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009); Bashkin, *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012).
[4] Ella Shohat, "The Invention of Mizrahim," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 29, no. 1 (1999): 5-20; Shohat, "The Invention of Judeo-Arabic," *Interventions* 19, no. 2 (2017): 153-200; Yehouda Shenhav, *The Arab Jews: A Postcolonial Reading of Nationalism, Religion and Ethnicity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006).
[5] Esther Meir-Glitzenstein, *Zionism in an Arab Country: Jews in Iraq in the 1940s*, (London: Routledge, 2004); Bashkin, *New Babylonians*.

she discusses the multiplicity of factors and the variety of interests (and their combination) that eventually brought to the migration of numerous Jews from Iraq to Israel. She therefore deals with the question of Zionism indirectly, providing a clear scholarly answer to the effect that this topic should be understood in its historical complexity and not simplified for ethno-national political purposes.

Main Contents

As for the contents of this volume, "each chapter explores different components of how Jews in Baghdad participated in the global Jewish network through communal organization, Baghdadi satellite communities, transnational Jewish philanthropy, secular Jewish education and the global Jewish press" (p. 33). The first four chapters detail the complex economic, political and cultural dynamics that regulated the transformation of the Iraqi Jewish community and, at the same time, the ways in which Arab nationalism brought it to an end.

Particularly important in chapter one is the history of the new administrative, political and economic role that the Lay Council of the community of Baghdad acquired after the Ottoman administrative reforms of 1864. These turned it into the engine behind the transformation of Jewish religious, cultural and political life in Baghdad and, at the same time, in the institution where domestic and transnational networks became instruments of modernity and modernization. The Lay Council was far from being a democratic institution; on the contrary, as Goldstein-Sabbah writes, "it was a representation of the wealthiest and more powerful members of the community;" "rabbinical leadership was picked by these elites, thus reinforcing the political, as opposed to ecclesiastical, nature of the office of the rabbinate" (p. 58). All in all, the Lay Council represented "the coming together of the structural changes brought about by the communal reorganization of the *Tanzimat* and Enlightenment ideals espoused by the local Jewish elites" (p. 57). In this respect, it acted as "an agent of modernity," becoming a secular partner in constructing a communal policy (p. 58). The centrality of this body and its branching out in many directions is particularly evident in chapter three, when the author discusses its history and role in dealing with, and regulating, Jewish

philanthropy. Central to this chapter is a discussion of the main economic sources that provided the means to support welfare and social aid in Baghdad and for the Jews of Iraq in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

One such source originated in the Asian communities, where Baghdadi families that had accumulated enormous wealth redistributed a (small) part of it for the opening of schools and other social institutions that would continue to carry their name in the Diaspora, a practice that recalls the family endowments in Islamic law through which many *awqaf* were established in Arab countries. The Kedoorie family provided funds for several AIU schools and for hospitals entitled to the women of the family, for example (p. 120). The AJA managed four major funds dedicated to Baghdad that were paid for by the Kedoories and the Sassoons. The other main source of funding originated in Europe (and in the US), and came from the AIU, AJA (and JDC); the direct involvement of these organizations made them agents of modernization and, at the same time, the representatives of specific imperial French and British interests. As chapter four shows, in different ways both the AIU and the AJA played an important role in the (secular) education of Jews in Baghdad, in terms of the languages that students acquired (pp. 158-159), the secular teachings they received, the connections that they were able to establish, and the access granted to girls in the context of secular and modern schooling. Their Western educational approach also reverberated further East, when many former graduates of these schools embarked in commercial activities and new lives in the Asian communities. While AIU was primarily concerned with education, the AJA was a "more active partner in the community, acting as a liaison for the Jewish community to both the British and Iraqi governments" (p. 112). The JDC was not a dominant philanthropic organization at this time, but its long-established presence and support turned out to be invaluable in the period 1945-1951, when the Jewish community was leaving Iraq and needed the logistical aid and the economic resources that this organization could provide.

In the fifth chapter of this volume, the author presents three case studies that illustrate, in very different ways, the variety and the relevance of the transnational networks that engaged the Jews of Iraq. (p. 173). Each of these could be considered an example of microhistory, within the transnational perspective of the volume. The first considers the spread of theosophy in Basra between 1921 and 1935 and discusses in which ways the establishment in Basra of a lodge of the Association of

Hebrew Theosophists came to challenge religious authority and tradition, and the Jewish community at large. The second example takes us into the 1930s, when Ephraim Levy, a middle-class owner of the Al-Rashid bookstore in Baghdad, was thrown in jail with the "accusation of defaming the Iraqi government in a British newspaper" (p. 185). Levy had written a letter to the *Manchester Guardian*, protesting the self-censorship to which publishers, booksellers and librarians were subject in Iraq in the mid-1930s; his words were precise, accusing the government of unfairness in their equation of Jewishness and Zionism (p. 191). Levy's letter did not obtain tangible results (except for attracting attention to himself); however his case is noteworthy for the extent of the transnational mobilization that it triggered. Members of the Lay Council became involved, and one of them, Ibrahim Nahum, intervened with the Kedoories in Hong Kong (letter published in Appendix C, pp. 226-229), hoping that their voice could help get Levy out of jail. The British Foreign Office inquired with the Iraqi state about Levy, the British embassy in Baghdad monitored the case and the Jewish press in Europe followed the court case in which he was tried. The third case study is that of the already mentioned Ibrahim Nahum, a middle-class member of the Lay Council and, most of all, the agent of the Kedoories in Baghdad, in the Levant and in Iran (p. 200). Here, Goldstein-Sabbah discusses the intermingling of the political, social and economic spheres within Iraq and in the relations that some Iraqi Jews entertained with members of the "satellite communities" in Asia. It is to this last point that I now turn.

Baghdadis in the Asian Context

Chapter two (and in part chapter five) are the sections of this volume where the author analyzes the family and commercial networks, the philanthropic relations and the travels of many Baghdadis (generally men and a few women) between Iraq and numerous sites in Asia.

When analyzing and representing Baghdadis' relations in the Asian context with their point of origin, it is almost impossible to strike the right balance between drawing a picture of connection and one of separation, of continuity and/or rupture. Both dimensions co-existed in varying degrees during the two centuries

of this experience, and the balance between the two changed with the changing historical contexts, both in Baghdad and in Asia. These relations were transformed as the geographical and the generational distance from the point of origin increased and by the encounters that Baghdadis in Asia had with other Jews, with Bene Israel in India and Burma (Myanmar) and with Ashkenazi Jews on the run from Russia to China at the turn of the century, or from central Europe after 1933 and 1938.

This volume is about Jews in Iraq as they developed family, commercial and political relations within precise cultural and geographical networks; in this context the history of the Baghdadi "satellite communities" in South, East and Southeast Asia—whether Bombay (Mumbai), Calcutta (Kolkata), Rangoon (Yangoon), Singapore, Shanghai, Hong Kong and/or other cities—is seen through the framework of connection and continuity with Iraq rather than through that of separation. By (re)establishing such a continuity, this volume (re)unites histories that previous literature has separated, thus changing the idea that migration from Baghdad and Iraq to distant lands necessarily implied severance from this point of origin. On the contrary, more than once in this volume the Asian communities are credited for their positive influence in transforming relations and lives in Baghdad. From this point of view, this volume marks another difference with the already mentioned existing literature both on the Jews in Iraq and on the Baghdadis in Asia. Indeed, from the perspective of Burma (Myanmar), Baghdadis have been analyzed as an interconnected diaspora; from India, they have been defined as a super-diverse community; and from the vintage point of Shanghai, they have been seen as imagined Britons; more recently, in less scholarly works and mainly considering the histories of men alone, they have been grouped with other Shanghailanders, international businessmen living and prospering in the French Concession and in the International Settlement of Shanghai at the turn of the nineteenth century and in the first decades of the twentieth.[6]

[6] Ruth Fredman Cernea, *Almost Englishmen: Baghdadi Jews in British Burma* (Lenham: Lexington Books, 2007); Weil, *The Baghdadi Jews in India*; Chiara Betta, "From Orientals to Imagined Britons: Baghdadi Jews in Shanghai," *Modern Asian Studies* 37, no. 4 (2003): 999-1023; Johnathan Kaufman, *The Last Kings of Shanghai: The Rival Jewish Dynasties that Helped Create Modern China* (London: Viking, 2020). The volume by Joseph Sassoon, *The Sassoons: The Great*

By focusing more extensively on the elements of connection and continuity between Iraq and the Asian contexts than on those of separation, this volume does not explore the history of the new generations of Baghdadis born and raised in Asia from the end of the nineteenth century and their relationship with Iraq. As Jewish Iraq and Baghdad began to enter a fatal political crisis in the 1930s, these Asian Baghdadis developed a new individual and collective identity that was less attached to their point of origin. From this perspective, the Asian communities could be seen as "hubs" rather than as satellites, a term which may appear similar but that implies some detachment from their necessary orbit around Baghdad and Iraq. As Goldstein-Sabbah herself shows, some of the commercial and political networks that involved the Baghdadi communities of the Asian hubs had already started to bypass Baghdad in the first decades of the twentieth century, especially in politics and commerce, when turning to London became an obvious choice. And when, especially since the mid-1930s, political instability in Baghdad (and in Europe) made Jewish life increasingly difficult and threatening, the Baghdadi networks in Asia helped Jews reorganize along different routes and find an escape. Centrally placed in the title of this volume, and recurring throughout the text, the word "networks" represents the main key to read the history of this population group, one that makes us look at the history of the Baghdadis by taking into account their dynamic, multiple and many layered commercial, cultural and political relations, and their constant intertwining.

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How to quote this article:
Marcella Simoni, discussion of *Baghdadi Jewish Networks in the Age of Nationalism,* by Sasha R. Goldstein-Sabbah, *Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History. Journal of the Fondazione CDEC* 21, no. 1 (2022), DOI: 10.48248/issn.2037-741X/13370

Global Merchants and the Making of an Empire, expected for publication in October 2022, is likely to add other perspectives on this topic.

Sol Goldberg, Scott Ury, and Kalaman Weiser, eds., *Key Concepts in the Study of Antisemitism* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave - Macmillan, 2021), pp. 356.

by *Ulrich Wyrwa*

One of the paradoxes of the present, which is by no means lacking in contradictions, is that Antisemitism is unanimously discredited in the public sphere, many official observers of Antisemitism are active in the fight against Antisemitism as never before, but at the same time Antisemitic actors are emerging and carrying out spectacular acts and an increase in Antisemitism is perceived everywhere.

Moreover, Antisemitism currently appears in many different forms, so that there is some confusion about what is meant by antisemitism. At the same time, the accusation of Antisemitism is used in such an inflationary manner and furthermore is so exploited politically that the term risks becoming increasingly incomprehensible and meaningless. More than 20 years ago, Warsaw ghetto survivor and committed German literary critic Marcel Reich-Ranicki had already described the word "Antisemitism" as a "dangerous word."[1] How dangerous the term has become is also shown by the fact that a controversy about its definition has flared up, sometimes with unrelenting sharpness. This dispute is also spreading to studies of Antisemitism, where different camps are irreconcilably opposed to each other. In this complicated situation, it is extremely commendable that Sol Goldberg and Kalman Weiser, who both teach Jewish Studies at the University of Toronto, together with Scott Ury, Professor of Jewish History at Tel Aviv University, have edited a volume on the basic concepts of Antisemitism research.

The fact that the editors consider themselves members of one of the aforementioned camps of Antisemitism research, as Kalman Weiser's introduction makes clear, is not a disadvantage here, but rather sharpens the presentation and clarifies the terrain. On the question of the definition of Antisemitism, Weiser takes a clear stance, namely that there is no clear-cut and generally accepted definition of this neologism. With regard to the methods and

[1] Marcel Reich-Ranicki, "Das Beste was wir sein können," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, December 2, 1998.

scientific approaches, the editors leave the 4 female authors and 19 male authors of the volume free. They also leave the controversial English spelling of the term "Antisemitism" to the authors. While Weiser writes the word without a hyphen in his introduction, there are some contributions in which it is written with a hyphen.
The editors have selected 21 lemmas as central terms and concepts in Antisemitism research. They in turn have listed these alphabetically because, according to Weiser, this is the most neutral way to order them.

The book deals with the related neologisms and political movements that are decisive for research on Antisemitism, such as Antisemitism itself, Anti-Judaism, Zionism, Racism, Nationalism and Nazism, as well as the two complementary terms Philosemitism and Anti-Zionism.
The volume opens with an inspiring entry on the term "Anti-Judaism" by Jonathan Elukin, that concisely adopts the approach of the whole book. The term has found approval in recent studies as an umbrella term for the hostility against Jews in different periods but lacks a consistent and coherent usage. This concept also ignores the changes in social relations between Jews and Gentiles. Furthermore, the assumption of a uniform and continuous hostility towards Jews is based on the erroneous assumption of a uniform and homogeneous Jewry.
In the keyword "Anti-Semitism" itself, Jonathan Judaken merely provides an insight into the development of Antisemitism research with a focus on the period from the 1920s to the 1970s. Without referring to Reinhard Rürups' profound overview of the development of Antisemitism research, which was published in 1969 and can still be read with profit,[2] Judaken concludes with the remark that such an overview has so far remained a gap that he has now tried to fill with his contribution.
Co-editor Scott Ury outlines the uses of the neologism "Zionism" and its connection to the term "Antisemitism." He uses as examples writings by six

[2] Reinhard Rürup, "Zur Entwicklung der modernen Antisemitismusforschung" (1969), in *Emanzipation und Antisemitismus. Studien zur 'Judenfrage' der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft*, ed. Rürup (Göttingen: Vanenhoek & Ruprecht, 1975), 115-125; Rürup, "Der moderne Antisemitismus und die Entwicklung der historischen Antisemitismusforschung," in *Antisemitismusforschung in den Wissenschaften,* eds. Werner Bergmann and Mona Körte (Berlin: Metropol, 2004), 117-135.

Zionist intellectuals and a Israeli historians. In his brief conclusion, Ury addresses the dilemma that the boundaries between scholarly research and public debates are blurred, especially when it comes to the question of the relationship between Antisemitism and Zionism.

Even though the concept of Racism is without question one of the key concepts in Antisemitism research, the relationship between these two terms is, as Robert Bernasconi points out in his contribution, disputed. Touching on various authors of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries - but not Arthur de Gobineau - Bernasconi focuses on National Socialist ideology. He does not address, however, the contrasting racial-biological concepts found in the Antisemitism of the National Socialist state. In conclusion Bernasconi aptly writes that the words Antisemitism and Racism have been virtually devalued at present by their incessant use.

Like the word "Racism," the term "Nationalism" is also often linked to Antisemitism, but it is unclear, according to Brian Porter-Szűcs, how the two phenomena are connected. Moreover, their relationship is contradictory. Nationalism, according to Brian Porter-Szűcs, cannot be classified as Antisemitic from the outset. One of his observations suggests that nationalist Antisemitism is strongest in those countries where the Jewish minority is small and the degree of assimilation is high. But even this remark, it might be critically noted, is not compelling, as the case of Italy shows.

The translation of Antisemitism into practical politics by the National Socialist state, according to Doris L. Bergen in her contribution on the concept of Nazism, reveals the consequences that Antisemitic ideology could have. Bergen traces the transformation of National Socialist Antisemitism from idea to political practice in three steps. However, she does not pursue the question of what effect the Antisemitic agitation of the 1920s had outside the still small National Socialist circles. In 1933, Antisemitism came to power and, in a process that intensified over several stages, developed a potential for violence that had never been achieved before. Bergen concludes with the observation that one of the most disastrous legacies of the National Socialist policy of violence has been the perpetuation of the image of the Jew as an eternal victim, which then went through a volt-face and painted them as profiting from their victim status.

In addition to the neologisms "Zionism" and "Antisemitism," the volume also contains the complementary terms "Philosemitism" and "Anti-Zionism." In keeping with the format of the *Key Concepts*, Maurice Samuels argues in his contribution on Philosemitism, that the volume should also include the positive experiences that Jews were able to have in exchange with the non-Jewish world. Samuels recapitulates individual episodes from the history of Philosemitism, only casually addressing some not unproblematic aspects of its use. He does not, however, take into account the decidedly philosemitic movement in Spain in the late 19th century. In conclusion, Samuels firstly advocates for paying attention to the hitherto completely ignored Philosemitism in the Muslim world; secondly, he warns against a new kind of Philosemitism that has emerged in the context of the current debates on Israel-related Antisemitism. This Philosemitism, which is also focused on Israel, contains, he warns, the seeds of disaster.

According to Loeffler, the term anti-Zionism also eludes a clear definition. He outlines three ways of using the term: the early inner-Jewish criticism of the Zionist movement, Arab anti-Zionism and the anti-Zionist policy of the Soviet Union. For all three usages, Loeffler points out pitfalls and ambiguities in the use of the term and he emphasizes the need to explore the convergences and divergences between Antisemitism and anti-Zionism.

Another group of entries refers to political-historical events such as accusations of ritual murder, the establishment of ghettos, pogroms, the spread of conspiracy theories and the Holocaust.

On the subject of the accusation of ritual murder, Hillel J. Kieval provides a profound overview of the origins and spread of this medieval legend, which first emerged in England in the twelfth century. Reflecting precisely on the respective contexts, Kieval shows how much the emergence of these rumors was connected to intra-Christian conflicts. In the mid-nineteenth century the legend resurfaced. However, Kieval's clear thesis is that it would be wrong to see nineteenth century ritual murder allegations as a return to medieval superstition. Behind the legends was now resistance to the emancipation of the Jews. For Kieval, the rumors were a symptom of political discord and social anxiety.

According to Daniel B. Schwartz, the word "ghetto" has become synonymous with the forced segregation of Jews from the Christian population. The relationship between the ghetto and Antisemitism, however, turns out to be

extremely complex. First, he outlines the emergence and spread of the term "ghetto," which originated in Venice in early modern Europe, and points out that the establishment of the ghetto in Venice, for example, must not necessarily be interpreted as a coercive measure. Schwartz then turns to the ghettos established by the National Socialists, especially in East-Central Europe, during the Holocaust. According to Schwartz, these ghettos were a calculated step towards the goal of exterminating European Jewry.

The volume's approach of liquefying or questioning the key concepts of Antisemitism research is also followed by Jeffrey S. Kopstein in his contribution on the keyword "Pogrom." This term is commonly associated with Antisemitism and hatred of Jews is diagnosed as the cause of violence. However, Kopstein remarks, if the Antisemitic pogroms are explained by Antisemitism, these interpretations form a circular argument. After a brief conceptual-historical review, Kopstein takes a look at three pogroms from different times and different countries: the Lviv pogroms of 1941, the pogrom in ancient Alexandria in 38 BCE and the anti-Jewish uprising of 1391 in Valencia. According to Kopstein's conclusion, pogroms were not primarily the result of pervasive Antisemitism; rather, specific social and political circumstances and the concrete situation in which Jews found themselves as a minority were decisive for the outbreaks of violence against Jews.

Any attempt to understand Antisemitism must remain inadequate, Jovan Byford claims at the beginning of the entry on "Conspiracy Theories," if this term is not taken into account. While Jews in medieval Europe rarely appeared as a malevolent force, but rather as the spawn of the devil, in conspiracy theories from the mid-nineteenth century onward they themselves became a powerful force dominating the world. In the present again, conspiracy theories target the state of Israel. With unmistakable criticism of the dominant language, Byford emphasizes that criticism of Israel, however, need not necessarily be Antisemitic or anti-Zionist, and that Israel must be measured by the same standards as any other state. However, Byford does not address the massive spread of Antisemitic conspiracy theories in the Arab world.

On the keyword "Holocaust," Richard S. Levy explores the question of how it changed the understanding of Antisemitism. The mass murder of Jews during the Second World War made older forms of dealing with the problem obsolete and at

the same time posed new challenges. According to Levy, the notion of eternal Antisemitism that had to lead inexorably to the Holocaust is not a fruitful path. Since the Holocaust originated in Germany, some scholars had argued that it is sufficient to trace German Jew-hatred from the Middle Ages to modern times to understand the Holocaust. According to Levy, however, this teleological view virtually prevents an understanding of both Antisemitism and the Holocaust. These one-dimensional representations, however, were the incentive for in-depth critical studies of both phenomena. New ambiguities, on the other hand, arise from the fact that Antisemitism itself has currently changed. It has become a moving target, as Levy writes, and the term is just as much as a shrill accusation.

In addition to keywords related to specific events, other lemmas are devoted to historical processes such as emancipation and secularism, including internal Jewish developments as expressed in the accusation of Jewish self-hatred. In addition, one lemma deals with an institution such as the Catholic Church.

Since some contributions point out the extent to which Antisemitism must be understood as a direct reaction to civic and civil equality as well as to Jews' social advancement, the concept of emancipation is also one of the key concepts in the study of Antisemitism. Frederick Beiser has studied both the history of the concept and the real history of Jewish emancipation in this sense. Beginning with the programmatic writing of the Prussian reformist politician Christian Wilhelm Dohm, published in 1791, Beiser traces the debates up to the controversies in the period of the emerging Antisemitic movement. Beiser concludes with a brief reference to Jewish reactions, the founding of the Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens and the formation of the Zionist movement. However, Beiser does not discuss the Berlin Congress of 1878 and the fact that through it the notion of Jewish emancipation became a principle of European diplomacy. Necessary is not only a precise reconstruction of the emancipation debates, but also, Beiser emphasises in his summary, an unbiased and thorough investigation of the motives of the antisemitic actors. Only if these are taken seriously is it possible to recognise the causes of antisemitism and its nature.

Beiser's contribution makes it clear that one of the preconditions for Jewish emancipation and thus the participation of Jews in public and political life was the separation of church and state. Lena Salaymeh and Shai Lavi, however, close their minds to this insight with their one-dimensional and uncritical concept of

secularism. Moreover, they offer no historical-critical reflections on the half-measures and ambiguities of the secularization process, but rather a literature review of current debates on the relationship between Antisemitism and Islamophobia. An essential and often neglected cause of hostility towards Jews as well as Islam, they proclaim apodictically, is secularism. Salaymeh and Lavi also describe secularism as a Protestant-Christian bias; it limits religion in the public sphere, but the restrictions do not affect all religious communities equally. According to Salaymeh and Lavi, not only is the state not neutral, they claim that it is downright repressive. The stigmatization of Jews and Muslims by secular law, they conclude, is an essential component of the hostility towards Jews and Islam.
With this categorical judgment, the authors make all differences between Antisemitism and anti-Islamism disappear, instead of working them out from a comparison they themselves demand but do not carry out. While the other contributions in the volume mostly illuminate the ambiguities and inner contradictions of the key concepts discussed, the explanations by Salaymeh and Lavi are based on a hermetic and one-dimensional concept. With their apodictic attribution, they also obstruct the understanding of secular self-understandings of Jews. The one-sidedness with which Salaymeh and Lavi deal with the topic of secularism corresponds to the lack of understanding that only the separation of secular and religious spheres made it possible for Jews to participate in public and political life, as Ruth Nattermann has recently convincingly demonstrated using the example of the Jewish women's movement in Liberal Italy.
Incorporating a theme of internal Jewish history, co-editor Sol Goldberg explores Jewish self-hatred. In his introduction, Goldberg emphasizes the complexity and controversial nature of the term. He takes up the skepticism towards the term but suggests that its use be steered in productive directions. In the inner-Jewish discourse, the term is also associated with betrayal and misused for defamation. Further confusion is caused by the fact that the word is often equated with Jewish Antisemitism. Recapitulating his own doubts about the term, Goldberg criticizes its misuse in the form of ideologically motivated accusations. As a key concept for Antisemitism research, the question of Jewish self-hatred is nevertheless fruitful. The concept makes it possible to grasp the psychological consequences of Antisemitism on Jews. At the same time, it provides insights into the intra-Jewish controversies.

In her contribution on the Catholic Church, Magda Teter traces a broad arc from the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 to the declaration "Nostra Aetate" from the Second Vatican Council in 1965. Despite the theological condemnation of Jews, the concrete relations of Jews and Christians were not necessarily and not always hostile, according to Teter. The harsh language of the anti-Jewish decrees obscured the complex relationships between Jews and Christians in everyday life. After the early modern ordinances, Teter moves on to the encyclical "Mit brennender Sorge" (not Brendenner, as it says in the book), which Pope Pius XI issued in 1937 in the face of Nazi persecution of Jews. Teter remarked that the Church nevertheless remained ambivalent, but it would have been clearer if she had also pointed out that this encyclical was directed against racism, and that Pius XI did not specifically name Jews in it and did not directly condemn antisemitism. Teter concludes her entry with a positive reference to the 1965 declaration "Nostra Aetate," with which the Catholic Church revised its anti-Jewish dogmas and condemned Antisemitism. Teter has convincingly urged that the relations between Jews and Christians should not be viewed solely from the perspective of Antisemitism and that sources on the social relations between Jews and Christians should be consulted in addition to the theological writings and church ordinances that are hostile to Jews.

What she has left out of this, however, is the extent to which the Catholic Church became not only a fellow traveler but, with Pope Pius IX, a protagonist of Antisemitism in the nineteenth century. Catholic newspapers, not only in Italy, played a significant role in the formation of the language of Antisemitism even before the term was coined.

Finally, a group of key categories refers to scientific methods and concepts such as gender, Orientalism and post-colonialism.

Any attempt to understand Antisemitism is misguided, so Sara R. Horowitz in her contribution on the keyword "Gender," if the intersections with the category of gender are not considered, especially since misogyny and hostility towards Jews often coincide. Horowitz chooses the time of the French Revolution as her starting point. Women and Jews faced similar obstacles, and their emancipation triggered similar cultural anxieties. Antisemitic texts portrayed Jewish men as greedy, effeminate, immoral or vulgar, Jewish women, in turn, were accused of behaving inappropriately.

These images can still be found in American popular culture of the second half of the twentieth century, and Horowitz concludes with a contradictory summary about the contemporary nature of these images. While some critics claim that these stereotypical representations have been debunked in American popular culture in the new millennium, others speak of the persistence of these traditional, gender-based anti-Semitic ideas.

The fact that the term "Orientalism" is also included as a keyword in this volume may at first seem surprising, since it is primarily associated with the hostile Western view of Arab societies of the Middle East. Ivan Kalmar, however, takes the reader back to the nineteenth century, when the common oriental roots of Jews and Muslims were being discussed in the sciences. In this phase of Orientalism, European Jews on their own initiative began to refer to their Oriental origins, as is evident not least in the Moorish style of European synagogue buildings. With Zionism, a new phase of Orientalism began, according to Kalmar, with which the decoupling of Jews and Muslims in the image of the Orient began. The Jews became Western and in the perception of the Arab population of Palestine they became colonizers. The Zionist project led to the dissolution of the old image of the Muslim-Jewish Orient, and Palestinian terrorism completed this development. In the anti-Zionist Antisemitism of the twenty-first century, the Oriental roots of Judaism no longer play a role. Self-critically, Ivan Kalmar notes in his introductory reflections that the reference to Orientalism could contribute to the knowledge of the history of Antisemitism, but it is less helpful in understanding its present.

Among the key categories relating to scientific methods and concepts is the term "Post-colonialism," but the issue of Antisemitism as Bryan Cheyette states, was sidelined when postcolonial studies became established. Antisemitism was partly treated as an issue of the West and acculturated Jews were even associated with whiteness. Zionism was presented as a colonialist movement, and together with the state of Israel it was only discussed polemically. Recently, however, a dialogue has come about between the disciplines of post-colonial studies and Jewish studies, which has become possible above all through the topic of diaspora and the experiences of Jews as a minority. Nevertheless, reservations about Antisemitism research remain present in Post-colonial Studies. According to Cheyette, Antisemitism research could nevertheless take up fruitful suggestions from post-

colonial studies when it turns its attention to the everyday experiences of racism. The point is to uncover the intertwined histories of colonial racism and racial Antisemitism and to view the different victim stories not as unique special cases.
Bryan Cheyette has not reflected however on the paradox that the most brutal colonial crimes were committed by countries where Antisemitism was rather weak, such as Great Britain or Belgium, while the countries where Antisemitism was fiercest, such as Romania and Russia, had no part in Western colonial history. Moreover, he does not address that form of colonial policy in which colonialist and Antisemitic practices coincided most strongly, that of National Socialist Germany in the East.
With the Hebrew phrase "Sinat Yisrael," hatred of Jews, Martin Lockshin has introduced a new term into Antisemitism research. Contemporary religious Jews often use this term, taken from the religious sources, to denote an eternal hatred of Jews. Lockshin focuses on the biblical and rabbinic sources as well as the shifts in meaning that this term has undergone. In the biblical texts, there are no references to Jews or Judaism being hated by others on principle. However, in the last book of the Bible, the Book of Esther, the figure of Haman is introduced, who was to become the incarnation of hatred of Jews. In the Talmud, hatred of Jews by non-Jews was not presented as inevitable. Only in the first century AD do we find isolated Jewish sources that speak of a fundamental hostility towards Judaism. As Lockshin shows, examining the early medieval exegesis of the Book of Esther, rabbis in this period began to interpret hatred of Jews, under the term "Sinat Yisrael," as a pervasive phenomenon. Lockshin concludes with the paradox that rabbinic sources for which fidelity to the laws was at the core of Judaism, sometimes remark that the observance of the laws must necessarily lead to the segregation of Jews, which is, in a sense, the cause of the long hostility towards Jews.
Neither the Bible nor the Talmudic sources, Martin Lockshin points out in his concluding sentence, portray hatred of Jews as universal and inevitable, nevertheless this view has become a pervasive feature of Jewish self-understanding.

As co-editor Kalman Weiser points out in his introduction, the volume, in addition to being skeptical about the demand for an unambiguous definition of the neologism, resolutely opposes a ubiquitous concept of Antisemitism under

which all forms of hostility towards Jews from antiquity to the present are subsumed. This broad concept would not only paint a largely monolithic picture of Jewish history, but also portray Jews solely as passive objects. In contrast, Weiser recalls Salo W. Baron's 1928 critique of the prevailing Jewish historiography of the time as a lachrymose narrative of Jewish history, a basic text of Jewish historiography to which several other authors in this volume also refer.[3]

As Weiser also emphasizes in the introduction, the editors' aim was to offer a study book for academic teaching, obviously with the Anglo-Saxon world in mind. Thus, the authors also come largely from an Anglophone academic tradition, and the English-language literature used for the individual contributions is correspondingly extensive. The number of German-language titles is very thin, and the literature from other languages even smaller. Only Frederick Beiser, in his contribution on the keyword "Emancipation," has drawn on German sources and studies to an appropriate extent.

The remark that the contributions to a handbook of this form are of varying quality is rather banal. Most of the essays, however, each in their own way and with different characteristics, provide a variety of stimuli; the inspiring entry "Anti-Judaism" is particularly noteworthy here. The above-mentioned critical comments on individual contributions cannot detract from this positive judgment. Only the contribution on "Secularism" is completely misguided and with its one-dimensional concept almost contrary to the concept of the volume. Not unproblematic, on the other hand, are the contributions on "Racism" and "Post-colonialism," as indicated above.

The selection of terms is surely the most problematic task in any lexical enterprise, and criticism of the selection or complaints about which keywords should have been included has something of petty nagging about it. But a few remarks seem helpful, if nothing else, to reflect further on the key concepts of Antisemitism research and thus to make clear what is productive about the concept. First, it is noticeable that no contribution to the historical semantics of the neologism "Antisemitism" itself is included. Language, however, offers a profound approach to understanding Antisemitism, as Reinhard Rürup and Thomas Nipperdey have already demonstrated in their, by the way, unmentioned article on this keyword

[3] Salo Wittmayer Baron, "Ghetto and Emancipation," *Menorah Journal* 14, no. 6 (1928): 515-526.

for the handbook *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*.[4] Although published fifty years ago, this entry can still be read with great benefit. In addition to the three keywords with the prefix anti-, the keyword "Anti-liberalism" or an entry that would have identified Antisemitism as a comprehensive anti-attitude against everything new would certainly have been helpful. Insofar as early Antisemitic activists were often attached to an outdated socio-moral world and the old values of a pre-capitalist subsistence economy, the keyword "Anti-capitalism" or the concept of moral economy could certainly also be grasped as a key concept in Antisemitism research. Furthermore, the keyword "Defensive action" or resistance deserved to be included in the list of key terms, which would also have fitted the profile of the volume excellently and touched on a topic that is still rather underexposed in Antisemitism research, despite the fundamental studies by Arnold Paucker.

These considerations, however, are not to be understood as an objection against the book; they should merely serve to further its stimulating concept. Apart from the one slip-up and two not unproblematic cases, the contributions are mainly fruitful because they liquefy the terms, clarify the historical shifts and different manifestations, or explore the relationship between continuity and discontinuity. Overall, the book is distinguished by the fact that it leaves well-trodden paths of Antisemitism research and questions established concepts. The great gain of the volume is that it has brought Antisemitism research out of the epistemic black hole into which the idea of eternal Antisemitism or of the longest hatred has pushed it and threatens to push it again and again. By placing Antisemitic thought and action in their respective contexts, illuminating the constellations in the occurrence of Antisemitism and determining its ambiguities and ruptures, the volume can sharpen the historical judgment of Antisemitism research, make Antisemitism more clearly comprehensible and thus also better combatable.

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[4] Thomas Nipperdey and Reinhard Rürup, "Antisemitismus," in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache*, eds. Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reinhart Koselleck, vol. 1 (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1972), 129-153.

How to quote this article:
Ulrich Wyrwa, discussion of *Key Concepts in the Study of Antisemitism,* by Sol Goldberg, Scott Ury, and Kalaman Weiser, eds., *Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History. Journal of the Fondazione CDEC* 21, no. 1 (2022), DOI: 10.48248/issn.2037-741X/13349

Rachel B. Gross, *Beyond the Synagogue: Jewish Nostalgia as Religious Practice* (New York: New York University Press, 2021), pp. 272.

by *Dario Miccoli*

The field of Jewish Heritage Studies is nowadays growing significantly and has already resulted into interesting research that discusses the intersection between heritage, memory and ethno-religious identity in different national contexts. In *Beyond the Synagogue*, Rachel B. Gross offers an original account of how contemporary American Jews are reshaping their Jewishness and enlarging—or, perhaps, revising—the meaning and place of Judaism through different practices and experiences of nostalgia. Nostalgia is indeed the core category around which the book is based, and is understood by Gross as a quintessentially modern concept that, as opposed to what some scholars have contended, is not always kitschy or "merely reductive; it can also be productive" (p. 28), and whose analysis, in this case, contributes to enlighten the American Jewish lived religion. Complementing historical studies on American Jewry—for instance, Eric L. Goldstein's *The Price of Whiteness* (2006)—Gross's book shows how this diverse ethno-religious group has inscribed its complex past inside the American melting pot, while at the same time retaining many of its specificities. Thus, she investigates public spaces such as former synagogues, museums, as well as genealogical societies and aspects of everyday life and material culture, like food and restaurants, children's books and toys, that deal with an (Ashkenazi) American Jewish past that has been—and continues to be—remembered and reinvented. The choice of the sources is probably one of the most fascinating aspects of the book, as it shows the potential of studying too often underestimated "things," to be found beyond the institutional archive and *Beyond the Synagogue*—as the title says.

The introduction and first chapter provide readers with a useful discussion of nostalgia against the background of Jewish Studies, suggesting that since at least the 1960s American Jewish nostalgia flourished and led to a redefinition of what it means to be Jewish: particularly, the author discusses the consolidation of a new kind of Jewish religion connected not so much or not exclusively to normative rituals and beliefs, but to "commonplace personal practices and feelings that are

mediated and standardized by certain material institutions" (p. 18). Even though this does not mean that more standard definitions of Judaism cease to apply, Gross convincingly argues that disciplines such as genealogy—that is at the core of Chapter Two—represent for their practitioners a "hobby, commitment, or mitzvah" (p. 43). Moreover, researching and writing about one's family history, even in the form of a blog or a Facebook post, is also an intimate commemorative act that complements the work conducted by historians or in places like Holocaust museums.

The third chapter is dedicated to historic synagogues as heritage sites. The use of former synagogues as heritage and tourist attractions is of course not unique to the US: think, for instance, of eastern Europe, or the many synagogues that are nowadays utilised not (only) as places of worship, but as tourist attractions in Italy, Spain or in places like Morocco and Egypt. The author focuses mainly on the Eldridge Street synagogue in New York, but also takes into consideration other cases like the Touro synagogue of Newport and the Vilna Shul of Boston. On this basis, Gross argues that these spaces convey a particular quest for authenticity on the one hand, and an "elegiac nostalgia" (p. 115) on the other—that, in turn, represents the figure of the eastern European Jewish immigrant as a paradigm for American immigration. In these synagogues, narratives of life and death are combined and made part of a larger story of multiculturalism that appeals both to Jewish and non-Jewish Americans.

In the fourth chapter, Gross goes on to discuss children's books that deal with the Jewish past in the US or in the (imagined) European worlds to which American Jews feel connected. As a case-study, the author analyses in particular the PJ Library, an organisation that since 2005 publishes and distributes Jewish books for children and young adults. In addition to this, the chapter looks at playthings like dolls. Children's books and toys are presented as objects that teach American Jewish children "nostalgia for Eastern European Jewish immigrants as practice of American Jewish religion and American civic religion more broadly" (p. 155), constructing what can be defined a "palatable American multiculturalism" (Ibid.).

Food and cookery, and the deli as one of the most iconic spaces where Jewish food is cooked and consumed, are the subject of Chapter Five. Looking at restaurants, cookery books and recipes, and stories of gastronomic entrepreneurship that aim to creatively reinvent Jewish cuisine—especially in New York—Gross investigates

examples of "campy and ironic nostalgia" (p. 188), showing the importance of food as something that reconnects Jews to their past and helps them celebrate it and transmit it in the present.

Beyond the Synagogue forces its readers to rethink the definitions of Jewishness and Judaism, taking them to "the new places and new communal practices where American Jewish religion is thriving" (p. 190). The author acknowledges that understanding nostalgic practices as religious might be at odds with normative definitions of Judaism, but also explains in quite a convincing manner the need to go beyond "the scholarly division between Judaism and Jewishness and [...] 'religious' and 'secular' " (p. 28). Therefore, even though Judaism, conceived in this way, may risk losing part of its normative meanings, it perhaps gains new ones more in tune with today's American Jews, and that ultimately constitute "an alternate [...] way of being Jewish" (p. 38). Given the focus on mainstream (i.e. Ashkenazi) American Jewish identity, Sephardi history and heritage—to which a minority of American Jews feel attached—goes almost unnoticed in the book. Gross also refrains from comparisons with European Jewish or Israeli processes of heritagisation that, even though different, are nonetheless part of a same global heritage and nostalgic revival. I am thinking here of the new approach found in studies by Ruth Ellen Gruber, Erica Lehrer, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett for what concerns the European Jewish context, and of Pierre Sintès, Marie-Pierre Ulloa, Susan Miller and others in the case of the Jews of the Sephardi and Islamic worlds. That said, *Beyond the Synagogue* is a very carefully researched and timely volume that enriches our knowledge of American Jewishness, also offering a template for rethinking the ways in which we understand ordinary (Jewish) objects and places against the background of an undeniably "nostalgic" world.

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How to quote this article:
Dario Miccoli, review of *Beyond the Synagogue: Jewish Nostalgia as Religious Practice*, by Rachel B. Gross, *Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History. Journal of the Fondazione CDEC* 21, no. 1 (2022), DOI: 10.48248/issn.2037-741X/13317

Gavin D'Costa, *Catholic Doctrines on the Jewish People after Vatican II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 240.

by *Raffaella Perin*

In the Letter to the Romans, Paul writes that Jews are still loved by God "for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable."[1] In the past centuries, Catholic theology on Jews' role in the economy of salvation neglected to recognize the irrevocability of God's promises to the Jewish people, preferring an interpretation of the relationship between the "old" and the "new" covenant in terms of "supersessionism." It was not before the Second Vatican Council that the Catholic Church began the "aggiornamento" of its own theology and doctrine with regard to Judaism: a rethinking that began with the publication of the Declaration *Nostra Aetate* (1965) and that continues nowadays.

The book by Gavin D'Costa, a renowned British Catholic theologian, is part of the wide debate on this topic and, as the author states in the preface, its purpose is to examine the "doctrinal trajectories" in the contemporary age of the developments of the application of Paul's teaching by the ecclesiastical magisterium. From a methodological point of view, the author circumscribes his analysis to the teachings of the magisterium, taking into account their different degrees of authority.

In the first chapter the author discusses the content of the unrevoked covenant with reference to Rabbinic and contemporary Judaism instead of Biblical Judaism. D'Costa argues that while during the Second Vatican Council the horizon in which the Fathers worked was still that of Biblical Judaism, it was Pope John Paul II who first began to speak of contemporary Jewry with the recognition that the Old Testament's gifts and promises are still valid. Consequently, his successors did the same.

In order to answer more fully the question of the content of these promises, in the second chapter the author examines the value that the Catholic magisterium has given over the centuries to Jewish cultic rituals. He argues that there is no

[1] *Rom,* 11:29, https://www.academic-bible.com/en/online-bibles/english-standard-version/read-the-bible-text/bibel/text/lesen/stelle/55/110001/119999/ch/c0f5384f2006e13e66c65ff135c765ce, accessed June 26, 2022.

discontinuity nor doctrinal contradiction with past ecclesiastical pronouncements in the current claim that these rituals are alive and life giving, and that, as the 2015 text of the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews states, "Jews are participants in God's salvation" through these practices. In the context of Catholicism's internal concern for the preservation of tradition, the author wants to demonstrate that there has been no overturn of the previous magisterium, because doctrine cannot contradict previous teachings, at most it can develop them. To this purpose, D'Costa argues that the previous tradition "operated with very different assumptions about the epistemic conditions of Jews and this meant a very different appraisal" (p. 28). D'Costa dusts off Thomas Aquinas' theory of "invincible ignorance," according to which, in regards to what one is required to know, "it is not imputed as a sin to man, if he fails to know what he is unable to know" (*Summa Theologiae*). He applies this theory to the epistemological condition in which Jews would have found themselves, and on the basis of which the ecclesiastical magisterium acted. The reasoning works, but only within a logical-theological system, namely, it is valid only within the space of a formal theological demonstration. Instead, it seems evident that outside this logic (i.e. if we exclude the fundamental assumption that D'Costa wants to demonstrate, namely that the magisterium does not contradict itself), by historicizing theology, we can clearly see the doctrine's transformations on the issue of (the relationship with) Judaism in conjunction with cultural, social and political changes to which the Catholic Church, like any other earthly institution, is subject. In short, the theory of "invincible ignorance" risks sounding paternalistic and does not withstand the test of history: it would have to be proven that the Jews of the rabbinic era were prevented by circumstances (?) from knowing the truth of Christ.

As a corollary to this argument, the author considers three binding doctrinal teaching documents published in three very different periods of the history of the Church: Eugene IV's bull *Cantate Domino* of 1442, Pius XII's encyclical *Mystici Corporis* of 1942 and the Declaration of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith *Dominus Iesus* of 2000. In the first document there is a long passage which says that after the coming of Christ Mosaic Law no longer has any meaning, and that whoever claims otherwise commits mortal sin; the second document maintains the sole exclusive salvific efficacy of Jesus Christ and states that no

salvific grace can be dissociated from Christ, a concept reiterated in the third document. The texts examined lead D'Costa to answer the question of the value for salvation of Jews' ceremonial laws and ritual practices in these terms: when these acts are performed sincerely, as acts instituted by God, they are efficacious, but not sufficient in themselves for salvation. For Catholic theology it is necessary to believe in Jesus Christ and the Trinity to attain salvation, despite the fact that Rabbinic Judaism, now and always, participates in the mystery of God's saving history. In this sense the magisterium seems to prefer the "trajectory" called "fulfillment theology." It will be necessary to return to this later.

A key point of the whole question is addressed in the third and fourth chapters: one of the (irrevocable) promises of the covenant with the Jewish people is that of the promised land. The author therefore wonders whether this promise also falls within the new doctrinal perspective of Catholicism, and if so, whether the current political configuration, the State of Israel, can be accepted by the Catholic Church not only from a political-diplomatic point of view, but also on theological grounds. D'Costa sees in some recent documents of the Catholic magisterium what he calls a "minimalist Catholic Zionism." Among these are the *Notes on the Correct Way to Present Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Cathesis in the Roman Catholic Church* (1985); a speech by John Paul II to a Jewish audience in Brasilia (1991); the preamble to the Agreement of 1993; and the Pontifical Biblical Commission's report, *The Jewish Scriptures in the Christian Bible* (2001). The author highlights those parts of these documents in which the magisterium seems to use theological and scriptural elements to support a Catholic Zionism. In the chapter dedicated to the "Key Terminology Regarding this Question" (pp. 69-70), besides the clarifications regarding the use of phrases "Promise of the Land" and "Land of Israel," it would have been useful to clarify the use of the term "Zionism," which the author takes from the historical-political sphere and transposes into the theological one without specifying to which Zionism it refers and without the term appearing in any of the cited documents. If, however, by "Catholic Zionism" the author means that from 1985, as a consequence of the revision of Rom 11:29, there has been a theological endorsement of the return of the Jews to Palestine, and assuming but not granting that this is indeed the case (D'Costa's interpretation is not the official one nor has it ever been adopted by the Holy See), then why, after the official recognition of the State of Israel by the

Vatican, would the Church have felt the need to further confirm the theological basis of this endorsement?

The author offers an attempt to interpret the Catholic magisterium on the relationship between Judaism and Catholicism with the (certainly noble) intention of underlining the possibility for Catholics to relate to Jews in a more "repentant, humble, positive" way (p. x). It is understandable that a Catholic theologian would use the hermeneutics that is familiar to him. But when it comes to the relationship between Judaism and Christianity theology seems insufficient. Catholic theology based its relation to Judaism on supersessionism, which for centuries negatively affected relations between the two religions with harmful consequences for the Jews. The mechanism that was implemented consisted in interpreting concepts from a religion other than Christianity from an internal point of view, that is, starting from concepts proper to Christianity. Judaism was not defined as it defined itself, but as its adversaries defined it, with the result of considering historical truth some Christian theological notions of history: for example, that God put an end to the covenant with the Jewish people; that the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem symbolizes God's decision to put an end to the Jewish religion; that God condemned the Jewish people to dispersion and deprived it of its land following its refusal to believe in Jesus. Anti-Judaism meant that from the refusal of the Jewish religion to recognize the revelation of Jesus Christ came the need for a supposed divine punishment of the Jews in human history, with a practical and political implication that consisted in placing the Jews in a subordinate socio-political situation.

After the Second World War, and particularly in recent decades, great efforts have been made on both sides to try to build a Jewish-Christian dialogue. An indispensable condition has been the mutual recognition that they are two different religions. It follows that these two different religions have two different readings of "the promised land." Jews believe that the land is not only a promise, but a gift and that they have the right to choose how to live, incarnate and interpret this promise, according to their own interpretation of the Torah. Christians have a different relationship to the same land. In the New Testament there are very few references to the land of Israel apart its holy sites, first of all the holy city, Jerusalem. Far more important is the message of "territorial universalism" contained in *Jn*, 4:21-24: Jesus says to the Samaritan woman "neither on this mountain nor in

Jerusalem you will worship the Father" because "God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and truth."[2] Seeking in Catholic theology the basis for recognizing the right of the Jews to live in what they believe to be their promised land, means leading the relationship with Judaism back to a paternalistic logic while continuing to read Jewish history in a Christian key.

On the contrary, political and not theological recognition of the State of Israel not only guarantees respect for the autonomy of Judaism and the right to self-determination of Jews as a people, but also guarantees Catholics and the Holy See the freedom to make political judgments about the State of Israel without incurring anti-Judaism or worse, antisemitism, as when, for example, Catholics and the Vatican attempt to support Palestinian rights. In other words: it is one thing to criticize the Israeli government or the settlers for the violence perpetrated against the Palestinians in the light of the respect for human rights, and quite another to express the same criticism on the basis of theological reasons according to which these acts of the Israeli government would compromise the election of the Jewish people, with an inevitable anti-Jewish judgment. I fear that this is the inevitable consequence of defining Catholic Zionism, as D'Costa suggests, as "Catholic theological support for Israel as a manifestation of God's love for his people" (p. 142).

This does not mean excluding the religious element completely: the Church welcomes, and recognizes as still valid, the triad "Torah, people, land" as constitutive elements of the covenant according to Jewish tradition, but the link between Christianity and Judaism lies in the people, not the State. It should also not be forgotten that not even Jews are unanimous in recognizing the State of Israel as the fulfillment of biblical promises. On the other hand, faced with a State that is increasingly sending out dangerous signs of religious Zionist hegemony, the Church will tend to defend the rights of Catholics and will not renounce their religious freedom in places it considers holy.

In the last chapter of the book the problem of salvation is addressed: what role remains for Jesus Christ in this new theological-doctrinal perspective? Should there be a mission to the Jewish people as there is to non-Christians? Should Jews

[2] https://www.academic-bible.com/en/online-bibles/english-standard-version/read-the-bible-text/bibel/text/lesen/stelle/53/40001/49999/ch/d781c69a71f84c786e079f4bbdb13981, accessed June 26, 2022.

who have become Catholics renounce the promises of the Mosaic covenant? These questions have polarized a wide-ranging debate. On the one hand, there are theologians who consider Jews in an "inclusive" perspective (Judaism as the root of Christianity), on the other hand there are those who support the existence of two ways of salvation, one valid for Jews and one for Christians. Focusing on the magisterial documents, out of coherence with the declared methodological boundary traced by the author, and simplifying greatly, we can look at the choices made by the recent pontiffs. Paul VI, with the publication of the new Missal in 1970 and the reform of the Good Friday liturgy, approved, along with the universal prayer that includes the one for the Jews, the theory of "fulfillment." Under John Paul II, despite the strong impulse towards a Jewish-Christian dialogue, there is not much difference. Benedict XVI-Ratzinger in October 2017, in a text published in the journal *Communio*, wrote that the theory of substitution "goes in the right direction but in its individual parts must be rethought," and on the question of Zionism he clearly stated:

> At the basis of this recognition [of the State of Israel] there is the conviction that a State understood in a strictly theological sense, a State of the Jewish religion, which would want to consider itself as the political and religious fulfillment of the promises, according to the Christian faith is not thinkable in the historical dimension and would be in opposition to the Christian understanding of the promises.

Recently, Pope Francis stumbled into the logic of opposition, provoking criticism both in the Jewish and the Catholic world. During a homily at Santa Marta in August 2021, the pope said:

> The Law, however, does not give life, it does not offer the fulfillment of the promise because it is not capable of being able to fulfill it. The Law is a journey, a journey that leads toward an encounter… Those who seek life need to look to the promise and to its fulfillment in Christ.

These words are clearly in contradiction with the attitude Francis held until then with regard to Jews, but also with the push for ecumenical and inter-religious

dialogue that he has always promoted. One can wonder who wrote this text, maybe not the pope himself, but nonetheless he read it. One explanation might have to do with the reigning pontiff's relationship with theology. His pronouncements do not have absolute value, both for the form and the occasions in which they are given, and because the aim never seems to be that of a doctrinal definition, but rather pastoral. In this sense, the 2015 back-and-forth between Cardinals Gerhard Müller and Walter Kasper, respectively former Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and President Emeritus of the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity, appears emblematic. The guardian of orthodoxy, in an interview with the French Catholic newspaper *La Croix*, claimed that his own dicastery was responsible for offering "theological structuring" to Bergoglio's pontificate. Kasper, Francis' theologian of reference, responded: "We must reject the arrogance of European theology and stop believing that we can teach this Pope. Instead, it is he who teaches us: even a European theologian can learn a lot from Francis, from his gestures and his words."

In conclusion, in this book D'Costa deals with an extremely sensitive and complicated subject with clear language and never assertively. He gives his point of view, perfectly aware that his interpretation could sound controversial. D'Costa's book has the merit of relaunching the debate, of leading to further reflection on an issue that seems far from finding a definitive solution. The dialogue among scholars from different disciplines (history, theology, political science, etc.) offers the possibility of avoiding dogmatism and outcries, which for centuries have accompanied the relationship between Judaism and Christianity. It remains to be understood to what extent the ecclesiastical magisterium will be willing to accept in full, and above all when, the contributions of the new studies on the topic. On this, once again, history will tell.

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How to quote this article:
Raffaella Perin, review of *Catholic Doctrines on the Jewish People after Vatican II*, by Gavin D'Costa, *Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History. Journal of the Fondazione CDEC* 21, no. 1 (2022), DOI: 10.48248/issn.2037-741X/13328

Jaclyn Granick, *International Jewish Humanitarianism in the Age of the Great War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), pp. 418.

by *Ilse Josepha Lazaroms*

Note: This essay is based on a commentary I gave at the presentation of Jaclyn Granick's book at Central European University's Jewish Studies Program (online) on May 4, 2021.

I would like to begin my commentary by noting that this book and the story of its origins are a testament to the magic of the archives. Jaclyn Granick and I met at the Center for Jewish History in New York in 2015, in the infamously chilled reading room that many of us know intimately or have at least visited, and so I am familiar with the archives Granick uses in her research, the collections she spent time with. I even know some of the exact same documents; I too have poured time, attention, and indeed tears (more about that later) over the records and correspondence of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee—the Joint or JDC—in my case, documents about the JDC's actions on the ground in Hungary. What amazes me each time is how the archives yield something different for each of us; we enter the quiet space of the archive with our own lenses, questions both private and scholarly, and we emerge with a story that is as much a record of the past as it is a result of our individual encounters with the material at hand. Granick's book dazzles in its scope, through the thousands of documents that passed through her hands—not just in New York but in archives across the United States, Geneva, and Israel—and in the care and comprehensiveness that characterize her scholarship. Her book is an affirmation of the potentialities of historical research for each of us entering an archive, enthralled as we remain by the magic that happens there.

Let me continue with sharing my impressions about the *kind of research* Granick did in this book, the *kind of story* it tells. What characterizes the American Jewish humanitarian presence in Europe, Russia, and Palestine in the period of the Great War and its aftermath—the three "theatres of relief," as Granick calls them—is the fact that these American Jewish humanitarians inhabited an "ambiguous middle ground." They did so literally, as the geographical areas of their relief efforts kept expanding and changing, and they did so intellectually and politically, as they were

forced to grapple with their own position as Jewish humanitarians, with internal strife, and with the relations they forged with local communities, other non-Jewish relief organizations, and the United States government. On the one hand, as American humanitarians, their relief efforts were embedded in a bold vision of progressive philanthropy, while on the other hand, as Jews, they were constantly guarding their "lowered visibility" and vulnerability as Jews, lest their efforts be seen in an antisemitic light—and obstructed by it. Secondly, there was a moral quandary that characterized international Jewish humanitarianism during this time: the desire to pull out of the affected regions as soon as possible after rehabilitating Jewish life in local communities, as well as the moral duty to keep caring for Jews in need—a situation that extended well beyond the immediate postwar years. There was an ethical component to caring for Jews *as Jews*, and this prevented the JDC from pulling out as quickly as they had hoped. As Granick cites, President Hoover admitted to the fact that Americans have an "instinctive desire for separatism from European entanglements" (p. 73), a comment that made me smile, as my own experiences as a European in the United States tell me that this is still the case. However, as Jewish humanitarians, this disentanglement from overseas Jewish affairs was not at all easy, and at times, it was simply impossible.

What emerges from Granick's encounter with her sources is, I think, a study in transitoriness. A humanitarian relief project that was intended as a temporary measure turned into something resembling permanence. The plight of displaced, ill, hungry, or impoverished Jews and orphaned Jewish children only worsened during the postwar years. How, then, as a historian or as a scholar of Jewish history, do you give narrative shape to a constantly changing reality on the ground, a transitory and shifting history? How do you navigate the space between a disjointed past and the desire to tell a coherent story?

These questions remind me of something Libby Garland, author of *After They Closed the Gates: Jewish Illegal Immigration to the United States, 1921-1965* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), once said at a talk at the Center for Jewish History: that Jewish communities are and always have been complex. "Jews," Garland remarked, "may be connected in some ways, but they are also divided by geography, language, organizational affiliation, national origin—and those divides matter. Again, I think this is one of the reasons Jewish history is so

rich in helping us pick apart the complexities of our modern world." At no point has this mosaic of complex relations, loyalties and identities shone more dramatically, and brightly, than in the historical moment Granick investigates in her book.

One of the ways in which Granick approaches the transitoriness of her sources, and of her story at large, is the fact that she closely follows her relief workers in their difficult and sometimes unlikely choices, decisions, and paths *as they make them*. Instead of imposing a preexisting structure onto the sources, Granick follows her protagonists, the JDC leadership, and the on the ground relief workers as they move from city to city, locality to community, continuously expanding their own scope of vision—as such expanding the scope of her book. Not only this: the particular and sometimes unexpected paths that Jewish humanitarianism takes in these years is *mirrored in the structure* of Granick's chapters. In other words, the sources guide the narrative form of the book, and this, I think, is where some of the brilliance of the book lies. By following her sources so closely, and by allowing for the ambiguity that this entails both for the Jewish relief workers themselves, and for Granick, studying these materials, a different picture emerges: the almost tangible contours of a lost historical time that sizzles with humanity and human complexity. Now, this is of course not to say that following the sources is all that Granick does in this book, or that this is an easy thing to do. Granick navigates her material by theme—there are chapters on money, illness & health, poverty, hunger, refugees, and children—and in organizing her material this way, she humanizes the institutional efforts of Jewish humanitarian organizations, and places them in dialogue with larger issues at stake in Jewish history and in the context of human rights in history (the book is published in the Cambridge University Press series "Human Rights in History").

Another thing that stood out to me in Granick's approach to her sources—a method that "unsettles" as much as it affirms, as she herself says—is the way she deals with the uncomfortable connotations or antisemitic tropes her subject touches upon. The moment you start talking about Jews and money, for instance, or Jews and illness, or Jews and immigration, an entire array of antisemitic ghosts appears that threatens to overtake, or limit, the analysis. There is always the fear that by dealing with these "couplings" so directly, you might inadvertently contribute to a perpetuation of these antisemitic tropes. However, Granick

confronts the issue directly by stating that: "Though my narrative starts to rub up against antisemitic tropes regarding Jews and money, Jews as an international cabal, Jews holding multiple loyalties, and Jews as rootless cosmopolitans, it of course shows them to be just that: antisemitic tropes. If the prototype for studying Jews and humanitarianism has been that of refugees (acted on) and advocates (acting on from afar), I am pushing well past that dichotomy to demonstrate the real experience of Jewish aid delivery and humanitarian-victim relations. My refusal to universalize this story beyond comparison and context is a crucial feature." (p. 24) By stating this, Granick diffuses the potential threat that these antisemitic tropes contain, and in doing so, a space opens for her to do the rigorous and attentive scholarship she set out to do.

Of course, what is so fascinating—and so telling of Jewish history in general—is that while in the book itself, antisemitic tropes or ghosts have no place, these tropes were constantly on the minds of the JDC leadership and the Jewish relief workers on the ground: they took the utmost care not to invite, or incite, any potential overlap between their relief work as Jews, for Jews, and the antisemitic stereotypes circulating and ready to sprout up at any moment everywhere they went. As Granick says, antisemitism is nowhere and everywhere in the book—a subject she said she might explore in a separate essay.

I will conclude my commentary with two quandaries, invitations fur further exploration and research inspired by Granick's scholarship. One has to do with gender and the role of women in Jewish humanitarianism. In the book, the JDC—as the connective thread among the various organizations—emerges as a rational, liberal, benevolent, American, and very *male* organization. On a photograph of the JDC leadership from 1918, only two women are present at the crowded table. When we think about humanitarianism, we might think about the care tasks it involves, about charity or the "selfless" act of helping others, and we might associate these activities with what has been traditionally thought of as "women's work." But there is a striking absence of women in the JDC. The main areas of relief work in which Jewish women were active were fundraising on the American side, campaigning for the financial adoption of Jewish children, and the export of American nursing practices to the three theaters of relief, including the export of actual Jewish nurses. Also, there was a strong ideological overlap between women, children, the future of the Jewish people, and Zionism—something that played

out mainly in Palestine. Now, as Granick makes clear, there is a distinction between charity, which was often done locally, by local Jewish women, and humanitarianism as an international, institutionalized project. Indeed, she states, "gender-aware relief was never institutionalized" (p. 79). Of course, the period of the Great War was also the time of the suffragette movement, or the "first feminist wave," as it has come to be known, and women, including Jewish women, were active in this movement in the United States and Europe and beyond. Often, Jewish women were involved in both projects at once: feminism and humanitarianism. I am thinking of Rosika Schwimmer in Hungary, for instance, who led the suffragist movement from her home in Budapest and was deeply involved with overseeing relief work for Jewish women and children (and who, sadly, ended up poor and exiled in the United States). I am wondering whether the relative absence of women in Jewish humanitarianism is mainly an American story, in other words, a result of the specific composition and power play at work in American Jewish communities? Were Jewish women more involved in other places during this same time? With other sources, for instance—such a letters or diaries or other non-institutional sources—in other archives, would another story about the involvement of Jewish women with humanitarianism emerge? Based on the work Granick did in her book, I am curious what the contours of such a story would look like—a thread to be picked up by other scholars in her wake.

My second quandary has to do with the lost world Granick conjures up in her book—and the connections between that world and our own. The day that Granick's book was presented was May 4, which, in the Netherlands (where I am based), is the Day of Remembrance of the dead of the Second World War. It has become a highly politicized event, with commemorations on Dam Square and in virtual rooms across the country, including those of our Jewish communities. These days, questions about who gets to speak about the past and whose stories get a stage and a microphone, are omnipresent. It once again emphasizes the importance of reassembling lost worlds and collecting the lost voices they contained, not just for what they meant in their own time, but for what they can mean in ours. Granick calls the period of the Great War and its aftermath "the Holocaust before the Holocaust": a time of great Jewish suffering, as well as great Jewish resilience in the face of this suffering. During these years, from 1914 until 1929, when the book ends (but not the story), the project of international Jewish

humanitarianism became a "non-state, welfare-state-like mosaic of Jewish organizations," a truly diasporic constellation that shimmered for a while, "then it was gone" (p. 300). What Granick is grappling with in this book is a world that has been destroyed. She recalls—and here I come back to the tears—weeping in the archives over the immensity of this lost world. Over its expansiveness, and the vast human efforts, losses, and gains that went into this project. I imagine that many of us have known moments of weeping in the archives, of being confronted with human lives and ideas that speak so vividly about ourselves and the worlds we inhabit that we are moved beyond words.

Something unbearably sad came full circle during Granick's work on this project, namely, the fact that the antisemitic trope of Jews and immigration—more precisely, the idea that Jews fuel and fund illegal immigration into the United States, thereby undermining white ethnic Americanness—made a violent reentry into public life during the mass shooting of Jews in the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburg in October 2018. As Jews and Jewish historians, these antisemitic ghosts between past and present are never far away. Granick's book is a keen reminder of the hope that went into the project of Jewish humanitarianism during the Great War, and while reading it I pondered the question of the lasting impact of this lost world. What parts of this world still exist? What hopes, values or dreams can we carry with us into a future that surely needs them?

Spending time with Granick's Jewish humanitarians, on the ground in Europe and in their offices in the US, has been a thrilling adventure, one that leaves me grateful for the work they did *and* for the journey that Granick undertook, tracing their every move across the continents, all bundled into this beautiful book, a meticulous, essential, and gorgeous cartography of Jewish humanitarianism at the time of the Great War.

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How to quote this article:
Ilse Josepha Lazaroms, review of *International Jewish Humanitarianism in the Age of the Great War,* by Jaclyn Granick, *Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History. Journal of the Fondazione CDEC* 21, no. 1 (2022), DOI: 10.48248/issn.2037-741X/13335

Jakub Hauser and Eva Janáčová, eds., *Visual Antisemitism in Central Europe: Imagery of Hatred* (Berlin - Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2021), pp. 290.

by *Carl-Eric Linsler*

This collection of eleven essays, edited by Jakub Hauser and Eva Janáčová, results from the international conference "Visual Antisemitism in Central Europe," which was organized by the Institute of the History of Art of the Academy of Sciences on October 17, 2019 in the Academic Conference Center in Prague. It was first published in 2020 by Artefactum (Prague), in Czech, bearing the title *Nenávist v obrazech. Vizuální projevy antisemitismu ve střední Evropě*. The volume is richly illustrated and encompasses case studies from the Czech lands, Poland, Hungary, and Austria, focusing on varying manifestations of visual anti-Judaism and antisemitism from the Middle Ages to the present day. The authors, who originate from diverse academic fields and disciplines, hereby make a significant contribution to the study of visual antisemitism, which has been curiously neglected for many decades despite its potential relevance for the understanding of the mechanisms governing the circulation, entrenchment, and persistence of antisemitic stereotypes.

From this collection of entirely noteworthy contributions, only three particularly enlightening essays can be addressed here in the interest of brevity. Drawing on the example of the Tiszaeszlár blood label, an accusation and trial that occurred in Hungary in 1882-1883, Daniel Véri's article sheds light on the "significance of cultural products in the creation, dissemination and survival of antisemitic prejudices" (p. 35). By way of an impressively elaborate and precise historical reconstruction, Véri shows, among other things, how paintings depicting the imagined ritual murder contributed immensely to the popularization of the myth; not only were they reproduced on numerous occasions and thus found their way into mass media and popular culture, but they assumed a reality of their own, living on and providing supposedly "authentic" proof for the alleged crime. In her essay on antisemitism in interwar Vienna, Julia Secklehner juxtaposes blatantly antisemitic caricatures from the satirical magazine *Kikeriki* with less aggressive—but nonetheless anti-Jewish—drawings in the humorous, rather sophisticated art

journal *Die Muskete*, thereby convincingly illustrating that "visual antisemitism was, in fact, much more widespread across social and political factions and that, aside from blatant attacks on 'the Jew,' softer undercurrents of stereotyping in entertainment magazines represented another, less visible though no less dangerous, layer of popular campaigns to ostracize the Jewish population" (pp. 123-124). Last but not least, in his essay on antisemitic caricatures in the Protectorate Press, Petr Karlíček investigates not only the drawings themselves, but also their creators. In doing so, he approaches an area which is difficult to research and frequently omitted, and succeeds in presenting some very interesting details about the authors of visual antisemitic propaganda.

By addressing multiple geographical and cultural regions, different historical eras, varying forms and degrees of antisemitic imagery, and by taking into account a broad spectrum of media and materials, the volume *Visual Antisemitism in Central Europe* provides a rich and helpful overview of the broad field of visual antisemitism and reveals three of its distinctive characteristics. First, the studies draw on a multitude of primary sources, including magazine illustrations, postcards, photographs and original internet creations, hereby highlighting the ordinariness and deep cultural embeddedness of the subject matter: Anti-Jewish images were and still are part of popular culture and everyday life. Second, the ensemble of essays illustrates the long history, persistence, adaptability and—alas! —the topicality of antisemitic imagery. In the words of Hauser and Janáčová: "What is demonstrated above all is the intransigence and at times even immutability of many anti-Jewish stereotypes" (p. vii). Third, the book's broad regional approach and the displayed similarities between anti-Jewish depictions in various Central European countries show that despite all regional and national particularities, great insight may be gained from considering and studying antisemitism, and indeed its visual dimension, from a transnational perspective.

In this context, two further assets of this volume are worth mentioning: For those of us who are, primarily due to linguistic ignorance, not overly familiar with the characteristics of visual antisemitism in the Czech lands, Poland and Hungary, this collection of essays offers rare but all the more illuminating insights. In addition, and on a more general level, while a number of specialized anthologies bearing on

the history and specific manifestations of visual antisemitism have been published in German and—to a lesser degree—in French,[1] comparable works in English are still scarce. Here too, this book is a veritable asset.

Given all the merits of this volume, one point of criticism does need to be addressed here as well. It is somewhat surprising and disturbing to see terminology such as "Semitic features," "Jewish physiognomy," or "the Jewish figure portrayed" without quotation marks or any other form of orthographic distancing when antisemitic images are described. Naturally, the content of this volume clearly shows that the authors do not intend to propagate antisemitic stereotypes—quite the contrary! Nevertheless, it would have been preferable to emphasize, by use of a consistent sensitive terminology and orthography, that antisemitic images never depict Jews or Jewish characters, but are products originating from the imagination of antisemites, applying the antisemitic construct of alleged Jewish physiognomy.

In addition, a number of desiderata should be mentioned: For instance, not much is known to date about the precise mechanisms of design, production and control of visual antisemitism. How were antisemitic images created? How did the creators operate? Did they use templates? Were there specific instructions, be it from the editorial team or from state officials, or did they create antisemitic images on individual initiative? More importantly perhaps, there remains the highly complex question about the precise function and effects of antisemitic imagery: Are antisemitic images "merely" an expression and indicator of antisemitic prejudices, or do they actively foster them, thus assuming an agency and serving as a catalyst of antisemitism?

Obviously, an in-depth analysis of these aspects, some of which are broached in a number of contributions, would have exceeded the scope of the present volume.

[1] See, by way of example, Jüdisches Museum Wien, ed., *Die Macht der Bilder. Antisemitische Vorurteile und Mythen* (Wien: Picus, 1995); Helmut Gold and Georg Heuberger, eds., *Abgestempelt. Judenfeindliche Postkarten. Auf der Grundlage der Sammlung Wolfgang Haney* (Heidelberg: Umschau/Braus, 1999); Mémorial de Caen, ed., *Dessins assassins ou la corrosion antisémite en Europe, 1886-1945. Collection d'Arthur Langerman* (Paris: Fayard, 2018).

These desiderata should therefore not be understood as criticism but rather—and I am certain Hauser and Janáčová will approve—as an incentive for further research.

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How to quote this article:
Carl-Eric Linsler, review of *Visual Antisemitism in Central Europe: Imagery of Hatred,* by Jakub Hauser and Eva Janáčová, eds., *Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History. Journal of the Fondazione CDEC* 21, no. 1 (2022), DOI: 10.48248/issn.2037-741X/13342