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FROM A FASCIST'S NOTEBOOK TO THE PRINCIPLES OF REBIRTH: THE DESIRE FOR SOCIAL INTEGRATION IN HEBREW FASCISM, 1928–1942*

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ABSTRACT. *Apart from Italian fascism and German National-Socialism – the most famous fascisms of the interwar era – considerable research has been conducted during the past two decades about generic fascism: fascist groups, movements, and parties in other countries. In Israel, while the Revisionist Zionist movement has been continually accused by its political rivals of being fascist, these accusations have not yet been examined according to any comparative model of fascism. Relying on Robert Paxton's model of generic fascism, this article examines how one of its components – the drive for closer integration of the national community – was manifested in the writings of seven Revisionist activists in mandatory Palestine: Itamar Ben Avi, Abba Aḥime'ir, U. Z. Grünberg, Joshua Yevin, Wolfgang von Weisl, Zvi Kolitz, and Abraham Stern. Their writings between the years 1922 and 1942 reveal a strong drive for social integration, similar to that manifest in other fascist movements of the interwar era.*

It was two weeks after the fascist seizure of power in Italy. In a report titled 'The victory of the fascists', Ḥayim Vardi – a 'special reporter in Rome' of the daily Hebrew Palestinian newspaper *Do'ar ha-Yom* – declared that Mussolini 'was able to prove to the government that the fascist forces are huge, and that the majority of the people pursues this great ideal: a strong Patria, with glory and fame'.¹ Naturally, not everybody was happy with the new political deal. 'The leftists', Vardi wrote,

mourn the fact that Italy is now in the hands of the black forces, and are afraid of the beginning of a horrible period of reaction. But their fear is useless.

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¹ Ḥayim Vardi, 'Victory of the fascists', *Do'ar ha-Yom*, 12 Nov. 1922. All quotations in this article originally in languages other than English were translated by the author.

It was neither the sinister forces nor the *Black Shirts* who took over, and ‘a horrible reaction’ will never take place in Italy ... In fact, it is the ‘proletariat’ which adheres to Fascism. It is worth noting that many socialists and even anarchists turned to the winning camp after their parties were destroyed by their opponents.

Loyal to the newspaper’s declared liberal stance, Vardi had no doubt that ‘this internal war should not be regarded as the war of reaction against free opinion’. He explained his political opinion by arguing that during the preceding three years, the Italian government

could not govern well, due to fear, favoritism and negligence ... Mussolini said that Italy had enough with a government which obeys the various parties; what Italy needs now is a government able to force the prevailing anarchy to obey it ... There was a considerable need for a strong and confident government, a stable and frugal control. This is the reason why the fascists conquered Rome without using their weapons and armed warriors.²

In Vardi’s view, fascism was the political method that provided a cure for social disintegration and political division, enabling the Italian government to rule effectively.

Vardi was not alone: others in Palestine shared this desire for a firm and strong government that would provide stability and grant security to the inhabitants of a country shocked and destabilized by the turmoil of the First World War, the end of Ottoman rule, and the emergence of both Zionist and Arabist nationalism. However, only some of them viewed Mussolini’s actions in Italy and the actions of other fascist movements as role models for the desired political, cultural, and social stability. These thinkers, all affiliated with Revisionist Zionism in Palestine, formed the core of the small yet vociferous political current of Hebrew fascism in interwar Palestine. This strong drive for social integration was one of their characterizing features.

I

Considerable research has been carried out on the ideas and actions of most of the persons, groups, and organizations of the Hebrew right in interwar Palestine.³ These studies, however, were to a large extent carried out either by

² Ibid.

³ A lively description of Palestine at the time is that of Tom Segev, *One Palestine, complete: Jews and Arabs under the British mandate* (London, 2001). A classic review of Zionist politics – both in Palestine and abroad – is Walter Laqueur’s *History of Zionism* (New York, NY, 2003). Yaacov Shavit’s *Jabotinsky and the Revisionist movement, 1925–1948* (London, 1988) gives a good – yet not always positive – introduction to that movement. A more recent research of Revisionist Zionism is Eran Kaplan’s *The Jewish radical right: Revisionist Zionism and its ideological legacy* (Madison, WI, 2005); Kaplan, however, does not consider any part of the Revisionist movement as fascist. Colin Shindler sheds light on some aspects of the movement in *The triumph of military Zionism: nationalism and the origins of the Israeli right* (London, 2006), while Nadav Shelef portrays

political opponents from the Zionist left, or by the Rightists' political descendants.⁴ Moreover, these studies usually focus on the thoughts and actions of the founder and the leader of the Zionist Revisionist movement, Ze'ev Jabotinsky.⁵ In many cases, it seems that the academic debates among scholars regarding Revisionist Zionism's fascist tendencies run parallel to their own political inclinations today: by its very nature, this controversy literature is either polemic or apologetic. Here, too, Jabotinsky's figure played a central role: while some left-oriented scholars claimed he was a fascist,⁶ his followers and political descendants emphasized the liberal elements evident in his political thought.⁷ So far, no research has dealt specifically with Hebrew fascism in interwar Palestine. Although it never matured – as will be explained in the following – such an autochthonic generic fascist movement indeed evolved in Palestine during that period.

But what should we perceive as 'fascism'? Juan Linz defined fascism as a 'hypernationalist, often pan-nationalist, anti-parliamentary, anti-liberal, anti-communist, populist and therefore anti-proletarian, partly anti-capitalist and anti-bourgeois, anti-clerical or at least non-clerical movement, with the aim of national social integration through a single party and corporative representation'.⁸ Emilio Gentile writes that the myths, political style, and symbols of fascism were 'created for the cultural socialisation and integration of the masses'.⁹ Roger Griffin sees fascism as an ideology marked – among other

the ideological changes through which it went in his book *Evolving nationalism: homeland, identity and religion in Israel, 1925–2005* (Ithaca, NY, 2010).

⁴ For a basic review of the literature discussing whether the interwar Hebrew right wing was fascist or not, see Dan Tamir, 'Some thoughts about Hebrew fascism in interwar Palestine', *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte*, 63 (2011), pp. 364–81.

⁵ Ze'ev Vladimir Jabotinsky (Odessa, 1880–New York, 1940) was a lawyer, a journalist, a writer, a poet, a Zionist activist, and a statesman. Disappointment with what he conceived as passivity of the established Zionist Executive led him to distance himself from Zionist mainstream, becoming the founding figure of the Zionist, Hebrew, and Israeli right wing. In 1925, he established the *Revisionist* Zionist movement, which took its name from his call to *revise* Zionist policies in a more active direction. Jabotinsky's first comprehensive biography is probably Joseph B. Schechtman, *Rebel and statesman: the Vladimir Jabotinsky story* (New York, NY, 1956). A more recent one – originally published in Hebrew in 1993 – is Shmuel Katz, *Lone wolf: a biography of Vladimir (Ze'ev) Jabotinsky* (New York, NY, 1996).

⁶ A clear example thereof is Shlomo Avineri's chapter about Jabotinsky in his book *The making of modern Zionism* (New York, NY, 1981).

⁷ Raphaela Bilski Ben-Hur, *Every individual is a king: the social and political thought of Zeev Vladimir Jabotinsky* (Washington, DC, 1993). For a brief account of Jabotinsky's sympathy or lack of sympathy towards fascism, see Shindler, *Triumph of military Zionism*, pp. 12–14.

⁸ Juan J. Linz, 'Some notes toward a comparative study of fascism in sociological historical perspective', in Walter Laqueur, ed., *Fascism: a reader's guide* (Berkeley, CA, 1978), p. 12.

⁹ Emilio Gentile, 'Fascism, totalitarianism and political religion: definitions and critical reflections on criticism of an interpretation', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 5 (2004), pp. 326–75. See his reference there to many other scholars as well.

things – by ‘an organic concept of the nation’ and ‘a “populist” drive towards mobilizing the energies of all those considered authentic members of the national community’.¹⁰ Roger Eatwell, in turn, asserts that fascism is ‘an ideology that strives to forge social rebirth based on a holistic-national radical Third Way’.¹¹ While debating the validity of some of its characteristics, contemporary scholars of fascism generally tend to agree that social integration is one of its main aims.¹² Clearly, the terminology of ‘integration’ is used not just to appeal to a common and ‘natural’ national ground. Being a part – either explicitly or implicitly – of a broader political project, it is also used to suppress differences and to allow certain groups – either the fascists or other groups affiliated with them – to gain power and resources.

In his 2004 book *The anatomy of fascism*,¹³ Robert O. Paxton presents an elaborate description of fascism as just such a broader political project. According to Paxton, fascism is a form of political behaviour marked by obsessive preoccupation with community decline, humiliation, and victimhood, together with compensatory cults of unity, energy, and purity. Paxton argues that the seeds of fascism lie within all democratic systems, and are likely to sprout in troubled societies in times of national crisis. It is a social phenomenon ingrained in modern mass politics, being present at some level – from dormancy to a total seizure of power – in all modern nations. In contrast to classical tyrannies, military dictatorships, and conservative authoritarian regimes – which usually try to lull their peoples into social and political slumber – fascist movements attempt to mobilize the masses towards internal cleansing and external expansion, while abandoning democratic liberties, competing against traditional elites, and removing legal restraints.¹⁴ With some parallels to the criteria and definitions of other scholars, Paxton counts nine ‘mobilizing emotions’ which together may comprise a good description of a

¹⁰ Roger Griffin, ‘Studying fascism in a postfascist age: from new consensus to a new wave?’, *Fascism: Journal of Comparative Fascist Studies*, 1 (2012), pp. 1–17. See also his earlier definitions in Griffin, ‘The primacy of culture: the current growth (or manufacture) of consensus within fascist studies’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 37 (2002), pp. 21–43.

¹¹ Roger Eatwell, ‘New styles of dictatorship and leadership in interwar Europe’, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 7 (2006), pp. 127–37.

¹² For further comprehensive reviews of the concept of *generic fascism*, see Arnd Bauerkämper, ‘A new consensus? recent research on fascism in Europe, 1918–1945’, *History Compass*, 4 (2006), pp. 536–66; Sven Reichardt, ‘Neue Wege der vergleichenden Faschismusforschung’, *Mittelweg* 36, 16 (2007), pp. 9–25; and Andreas Umland, ‘Refining the concept of generic fascism’, *European History Quarterly*, 39 (2009), pp. 298–309.

¹³ Robert O. Paxton, *The anatomy of fascism* (New York, NY, 2004). An earlier version of this model was presented by Paxton, ‘The five stages of fascism’, *Journal of Modern History*, 70 (1998), pp. 1–23.

¹⁴ Paxton, *Anatomy of fascism*. Paxton also suggests an *evolutionary model* of fascism, with five phases: creation of a fascist movement; its taking root; acquiring power; exercising power and finally an end phase of either radicalization or decline. Each fascist movement can be examined and assessed according to its progress along this evolutionary line.

fascist movement. According to Paxton's model, fascism can generally be defined as a radical nationalistic ideology which entails:

1. a sense of overwhelming crisis beyond the reach of any traditional solutions;
2. belief in the primacy of the group, to which one has obligations superior to all rights, whether individual or universal, and the subordination of the individual to the group;
3. the belief that the group is a victim, thus justifying any action against its enemies, both internal and external;
4. dread of the group's decline under the corrosive effects of individual liberalism, class conflict and alien influences;
5. the need for closer integration of a purer community, either by consent or by force;
6. the need for authority of natural chiefs, culminating in one national chieftain;
7. the superiority of the leader's instincts over abstract and universal reason;
8. the beauty of violence and the efficacy of will, when devoted to the group's success;
9. the right of the chosen people to dominate others without restraint of any kind of human or divine law, while the sole criterion defining it is the group's prowess within a Darwinian struggle.¹⁵

Taken each for itself, these mobilizing emotions are not unique to fascism. For instance, a sense of overwhelming crisis is expressed today by progressive, socialist, and liberal parties in Europe; dread of the group's decline was – and still is, actually – common among conservatives; the belief that one's group is a victim is shared by many, from Shi'ite believers and Serb nationalists; and the superiority of a leader's instincts over abstract reason is deeply rooted in many spiritual groups and sects. In a similar vein, the desire for closer integration of a national community can be traced in other nationalist movements. Genuine and unique to fascism is the accumulation of these mobilizing emotions together and their fusion within one political ideology.

This article presents the ways in which that fifth mobilizing emotion, the need for closer integration of a purer community, was expressed in the writings of prominent standard-bearers of the Maximalist faction within the Revisionist movement in Palestine during the 1920s and 1930s. This group of writers, essayists, publicists, journalists, poets, and politicians found its first proponents in Itamar Ben Avi and other writers in *Do'ar ha-Yom*, the newspaper he owned and edited. The core of this political group consisted of members of the Maximalist faction within the Revisionist group during the 1930s – mainly Abba Aḥime'ir, Joshua Yevin, and Uri Zvi Grünberg – who soon established their own newspapers, *Ha-Am* and *Hazit ha-Am*. Its extremist descendant was Abraham Stern, founder of the National Military Organization (NMO) in Israel.¹⁶

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 219–20.

¹⁶ The term *Israel* had several – partially overlapping but never identical – meanings at the time. Aḥime'ir, Yevin, Grünberg, and Von Weisl used it mostly as a synonym for the Jewish

II

In September 1928, a few years after Mussolini's ascension to power, Abba Aḥime'ir began to write a weekly column in *Do'ar ha-Yom*; the column bore the title 'From the notebook of a fascist'. At the same time, Ze'ev Jabotinsky, head of the Revisionist Zionist movement, was about to arrive in Palestine; the British Mandate authorities were willing to grant him an entry visa under certain conditions. Aḥime'ir – a sceptical socialist just a few years earlier, but a devoted nationalist by that time – sharply criticized the opinion expressed in the liberal newspaper *Ha-'Aretz* and its socialist companion *Davar*: both newspapers declared that Jabotinsky – who was already perceived as their political opponent from the right wing – should be granted an entry visa, exactly as communist activists – their opponents from the left – should.

Aḥime'ir, it seems, took this syllogism as a personal insult. 'The "gentlemanhood" of M. G. from *Ha-'Aretz* and M. B. from *Davar*',¹⁷ he wrote,

is the same vegetarian gentlemanhood which played a central role in the Bolsheviks' ascension to the throne in Russia . . . the same public vegetarianism which allowed Trotsky to enter Russia, and opposed sentencing Lenin and Trotsky the way Luxemburg and Liebknecht were sentenced in Germany.¹⁸

Born in 1897 in White Russia, Abba Gaissinowitsch migrated to Palestine at the age of fifteen.¹⁹ During the First World War he was again in White Russia; a few months after its end he entered the University of Kiev. Parallel to his academic studies, he worked as a reporter for the local Soviet newspaper, *Izvestia*. In 1919, his brother, Me'ir, fell in action while serving as a Red Army officer. In memoriam, Gaissinowitsch changed his name to Aḥime'ir, literally meaning 'Me'ir's Brother'.²⁰ The next year, Aḥime'ir left Russia and continued his studies in Liège and Vienna, where he became close to the socialist circles of the city. In 1924, he submitted his Ph.D. thesis: a critique of Oswald Spengler's perception of Russian history in his book *Decline of the West*.²¹ Back in Palestine,

people. This was sometimes the case with the term Hebrew as well. In a manner common to many other Zionist writers and politicians, their language was Hebrew, their land Israeli and their people Jewish. This confused mixture was discarded by the younger and more extremist Abraham Stern, who – influenced by the ideas of Jonathan Raitoš and Adolf Gurevicz – sought a clear cut between diaspora Jews and local autochthonic indigenous Hebrews.

¹⁷ Moshe Joseph Glücksohn (1878–1939) was chief editor of *Ha-'Aretz* at that time. 'M.B.' probably refers to Moshe Beilinson (1889–1936), one of the senior journalists and editors of the socialist daily newspaper *Davar*.

¹⁸ Abba Aḥime'ir, 'On the issue of the visa for Jabotinsky (from the notebook of a fascist)', *Do'ar ha-Yom*, 21 Sept. 1928.

¹⁹ The details in Aḥime'ir's biography are taken from his papers at the Jabotinsky Archive (JA), P-5/1/1.

²⁰ Aḥime'ir continued to use his old family name occasionally, in official matters, until his return to Palestine in 1924.

²¹ Aba Gaissinowitsch, 'Bemerkungen zu Spenglers Auffassung Russlands: Inaugural-Dissertation zur Erlangung der philosophischen Doktorwürde vorgelegt der philosophischen

Aḥime'ir joined the Young Worker Party. Using his journalistic experience, he began writing in Hebrew for the party's newspaper – also called 'The Young Worker', *Ha-Po'el ha-Tza'ir* – the socialist newspaper *Davar*, and the liberal *Ha'Arezt*. Close contact with local socialist circles, however, made him weary with their political stance; in 1928 he joined Jabotinsky's Revisionist movement and soon became one of its central activists.

By that time, communists were clearly outcasts for Aḥime'ir. Making an important distinction between ethnic affiliation and political views, he declared that he did not support 'the free entrance of Jews to our land, but only the free entrance of Zionists. Zionists are the only ones we need here'.²²

Happy to see that the British authorities put obstacles not only before Zionists but in the way of immigrants suspected of taking part in communist activities as well, Aḥime'ir – in a rare expression of approval of anything done by the Mandate regime – actually praised the British authorities 'for the process of disinfecting our country of that bacteria carrying the social illness known as "communism", scientifically called *morus russotum*, "The Russian Malady"'. These actions of the government, however, were not enough. Aḥime'ir argued that

not all communists were deported, and some of them still walk around here, among us. We should firmly demand the expulsion of each and every communist, and not as the consequence of a legal 'procedure': a communist should be sent out of our country not by a legal decree, but by the administrative authority of the clerkship. The war against each and every communist is not enough: one should fight against communists and communism alike.²³

To avoid any doubt, he clarified that not only communism, but all foreign and non-nationalist ideologies, should be uprooted from Palestine, since they were all obstacles on the way towards national revival. The Hebrew society

shall also be allowed to harbour those indulgences named 'liberalism, human rights and socialism' ... in a hundred years, when our stable state is established. Liberalism – in its wider sense, not necessarily that of the party – is possible in Great Britain; human rights are the privilege of France ... socialism's nice gestures have their place in organized Belgium, with its dense population and developed industry ... But at the outset of our war for statehood, we cannot afford ourselves such 'luxuries'.²⁴

The desired integration was not only in the sphere of political parties and organizations, but in the realm of culture and language as well. Such a demand for cultural integration was expressed by Itamar Ben Avi, *Do'ar ha-Yom*'s editor. Born in Jerusalem in 1885, the son of Eli ezer Ben Jehuda – 'The Resuscitator of

Fakultät der Wiener Universität' (D.Phil. thesis, Vienna, 1924). A copy of the dissertation is kept at 'Beyt Abba', the archive of the family, in Ramat Gan.

²² Aḥime'ir, 'On the issue of the visa for Jabotinsky'.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

the Hebrew Language' – grew up in a highly politicized environment: until his dying day he declared his desire to continue his father's enterprise, for the resurrection not only of the Hebrew language, but of the Hebrew nation as well.²⁵ Fluent in Hebrew, Arabic, English, German, and French – and probably familiar with Russian and Turkish – he worked almost his entire adult life as a journalist, a publicist, an editor, and a media entrepreneur – with a clear fondness for strong political personalities.²⁶ At the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s, Ben Avi was president of the Hebrew-Italian Club and maintained close relations with Italian officials.²⁷ Fascinated by the idea of national revival and Latin heritage, his distancing from Italy took place only at the late 1930s.

Ben Avi met Ze'ev Jabotinsky in Egypt during the First World War, and the friendship between the two journalists lasted more than a decade. In 1928, upon his return to Palestine, Jabotinsky became the editor of *Do'ar ha-Yom*, which was founded by Ben Avi in 1919. Coincidentally, two days after Jabotinsky's arrival in Jaffa, members of the Tel-Aviv club of the Marxist-socialist party Po'alei Zion held a public meeting, headed by the party's chairman, Jacob Zerubbabel. This meeting was not only a socialist event; it was also planned to be held in Yiddish. A squad of activists of Beitar – the Revisionist youth movement – tried to break into the socialist club and hamper the event; thirteen people were injured in the violent quarrel which broke out between the Beitar activists and the socialist Yiddish-speaking militants.²⁸ Ignoring the inconvenient fact that these were Hebrew Beitar activists who stormed the socialist Yiddish club and not vice versa, Itamar Ben Avi lamented the fact that 'some thugs came in defence of the jargon [i.e. Yiddish] . . . especially these days, when common unity is needed – a sacred unity in front of the common enemy [i.e. Arab nationalists]'.²⁹ Ben Avi thus made it clear that unity alone would not suffice: this unity must be a Hebrew one.

III

About three years later, in the spring of 1931, the question of national unity surfaced in another sphere, this time in regard to agricultural labour.

²⁵ Itamar Ben-Avi, *In the dawn of our independence: memoirs of the first Hebrew child* (Jerusalem, 1961), pp. 6 ff [in Hebrew].

²⁶ Although his memoirs should be taken with a grain of salt, it is not improbable that Ben Avi indeed met Mustafa Kemal when the latter was stationed as an Ottoman officer in Jerusalem. In his autobiography, Ben Avi tries to show how great minds think alike, hinting that it was his idea to write Hebrew in Latin letters which inspired the Ottoman officer to do the same in Turkey about fifteen years later. For a lively description of this Araq-saturated conversation, see *ibid.*, pp. 213–18.

²⁷ Ben Avi, *In the dawn*, pp. 500–4. Ben Avi died after a severe heart attack in 1943.

²⁸ On that event and the general animosity between Hebrew nationalists and Yiddish-speaking groups, see Zohar Shavit, 'Tel Avivian, speak Hebrew!: the partial success of the Hebrew revolution', *Panim*, 45 (2008), pp. 50–65 [in Hebrew].

²⁹ Ben Avi, 'The war among brothers in Tel Aviv', *Do'ar ha-Yom*, 8 Oct. 1928.

Landowners in Kfar Saba were looking for seasonal workers; as the 'Federation of Hebrew Workers in Palestine' – commonly known as 'The Federation', in Hebrew: '*Ha-Histadrut*' – could not mobilize enough workers, some members of the Revisionist party and the Beitar movement went to work there, in order to prevent the farmers from hiring 'Arab' workers. While the socialist inclination of the Federation was usually restricted to its nationalist practice – i.e. building Hebrew institutions and supporting 'Hebrew' workers in their competition against 'Arab' workers – the mobilization and employment of Beitar workers without the socialist Federation's mediation led to a heated debate between the Federation and the Revisionists. 'We fully acknowledge the great obstacles lying on the way towards the economic integration of Hebrew immigrants in Palestine', wrote Abba Aḥime'ir in a letter to the heads of the Federation. He stressed, however, that 'not only the workers, but other pioneers of Hebrew settlement as well must overcome huge difficulties' – hinting, in line with the fascist corporatist theory, that not only manual labourers should be regarded and treated as pioneers. Calling for social cohesion, Aḥime'ir stated that

any attempt to violate the Hebrew front's unity in this war would strike a severe blow to the Zionist project. It is precisely our clear recognition of the necessary superiority of the nation's cause which makes us believe that the unity of the professional movement in Palestine is highly desired, and that it is necessary to restrain any factor which may lead to the emergence of parallel trade unions.³⁰

That said, Aḥime'ir reminded his readers that one should not 'ignore the fact that in other countries ... one may find examples for different professional associations which exist one next to the other, without harming the cause of the workers'. As an example for such unions, he mentioned the '*freie Gewerkschaften*' in Germany. In other words: unity is desired, as long as it is in line with the Revisionists' political agenda and under their dominance, or – at least – as long as it is not controlled by the socialists.

Aḥime'ir then referred to the desired organization of the national labour force, quoting *Bustenay*, the official newspaper of the farmers' union, where farmers declared they 'demand a neutral employment office ... while all the economic disputes should be settled through arbitration'. This clear adaptation of corporatism was necessary for the sake of national cohesion, in Aḥime'ir's opinion, since

the 'Federation' educates its members by the principles of class struggle, and carries out a series of strikes ... severely harming the young and fragile Hebrew economy ... The 'Federation' sticks to these principles against the will of many of the workers who think – like the entire nationally politically minded Zionist public – that during the time of the construction of the Hebrew statehood, any kind of active class struggle is a national crime.³¹

³⁰ Aḥime'ir to the Federation of the Hebrew Workers in Palestine, 2 June 1931, Tel Aviv, JA, P-5/1/3.

³¹ Ibid.

Furthermore, 'the Federation created, at the expense of the general Zionist budget, a whole network of schools, which stands parallel to the general national schools – a thing that many people regard as an intolerable insult to Hebrew education's unity'.³²

This dispute over the organization of the labour force was just the beginning of a wider and deeper conflict between the Revisionists and the Labour stream within the Zionist movement, which finally brought about the Revisionists' withdrawal from the Zionist Organization in 1931, and the inauguration of a parallel organization – the *New Zionist Organization* – in 1935.

Striking a balance between the desire for national integration and the need to maintain a proud, uncompromising policy was not an easy task. 'We shall use all our means in order to promote Israel's unity in Palestine', wrote Wolfgang von Weisl after the Revisionists boycotted the elections to the Jewish 'national committee' of the Zionist organization in Palestine, a few months earlier. 'But we shall not take part in this game of agreed-upon lies, just for the sake of satisfying our opponents, letting them hold the reins in the future as well.'³³

National integration was not just a matter of technical electoral consolidation, but of cultural means as well. That same month – amid the usual sharp criticism of Weizmann and the 'General Zionists' – an editorial in *Ha-Am* heaped compliments on two Hebrew journals abroad. 'We, the extreme Hebrews [sic], who see the issue of language from an extreme point of view ... gained some pleasure this week', the editorial opened. The author was happy to learn that two Hebrew journals – *Ha-Zfira* in Eastern Europe and *Ha-Olam* in Western Europe – would continue to be published regularly.³⁴ The publishing of *Ha-Zfira* was a 'double joy', since that journal was Hebrew, Zionist, and non-partisan, i.e. neither pro-liberal nor socialist. The editorial expressed its delight at the publishing of *Ha-Olam* as well, in spite of the fact that the Revisionists – or, to use the editor's words, 'the extreme Hebrews' – had 'a bitter dispute with this weekly, which serves as the voice of Great Russell Street and all its experiments'. However, *Ha-Am* cordially greeted 'every platform which helps expressing the Hebrew language and the Hebrew spirit around the world'.³⁵

³² Ibid.

³³ Wolfgang Von Weisl, 'The agreed-upon lies of the National Committee', *Ha-Am*, 25 Mar. 1931. During the First World War, Von Weisl (Vienna, 1896–Gedera, 1974) served as an artillery officer on the Russian and Italian fronts. A physician by profession, he arrived in Palestine in 1922; in 1925, he joined Ze'ev Jabotinsky, and became one of the founders of the Revisionist movement.

³⁴ Editorial, 'The Siren and The World', *Ha-Am*, 31 Mar. 1931.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 77. Great Russell Street in London was the address of the offices of the Jewish Agency and the Zionist Organization, and a general code for the official Zionist policy. The same day, a headline on the front page announced that 'Hitler wins in Austria too: 64 NS representatives elected at state elections in Salzburg'. Another item, titled 'Dictatorship for the sake of parliamentarianism', reported that Germany entered a 'state of siege', after the German government issued a decree aimed at 'opposing hooliganism', in response to 'the recent clashes between the "National Socialists" and the Communists'. *Ha-Am* (which later became

The writers of *Ha-Am* were clearly aware of the fact that public debates involving different opinions are a part of modern mass politics. 'We are a people like all other peoples, with both revolutionaries and conservatives', wrote Aḥime'ir in an article commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Benjamin Disraeli, reflecting on Beaconsfield's conservatism.³⁶

In other publications, however, Aḥime'ir's tone was not so friendly. Parallel to his official political activity, in 1930 he gathered, together with Uri Zvi Grünberg and Joshua Heschel Yevin, a group of young activists, which was separate from Beitar yet not disconnected with it. These three sought youngsters who were willing not only to speak, but to act as well. 'In this journal ... we shall call the things by their names. We shall call the traitors – traitors!' Aḥime'ir, Grünberg, and Yevin promised their readers.³⁷ These were summoned not only to war 'against the hostile British rulers' but against 'the traitors from within', these 'agents of the rulers, among the "Zionist" leadership' too.³⁸

As preparations for the 1931 Zionist Congress entered high gear, the Revisionist party did the best it could to mobilize its supporters. 'Zionist! Arm yourself with the Sheqel!', read an advertisement in the paper in April that year. The aim was to 'turn the "round table" upside down; drive the representatives of the rich men away from the national institutions; eradicate the reign of the Red International from our institutions'.³⁹ Thus, the Revisionists tried to portray themselves both as anti-bourgeois and as protectors of the workers, and, at the same time, as anti-communists, hoping to appeal to as wide a constituency as possible.

Although the preparations for the Zionist congress required considerable investment of time and energy by the small group of devoted Revisionists, these did not forget their cultural obligations. 'The poet Shaul Tschernichowski came to Palestine yesterday', read the title in *Ha-Am* the next month; the newspaper expressed its hope that 'this time he will stay with us'. Tschernichowski was not the first Hebrew modern poet, but one of the most important among them. According to *Ha-Am*, his contribution to the consolidation of a unifying national myth was invaluable, since he was the one who 'created the world-view of renewed national Judaism, with its ancient biblical heroes. Renewed Zionism is imbued with primordial romanticism of ancient Israel.'

Hazit ha-Am) kept its relatively balanced tone in reports about Nazi activities in Germany, at least until 1933.

³⁶ Aḥime'ir, 'Around Beaconsfield', *Ha-Am*, 19 Apr. 1931.

³⁷ Brit ha-Biryonim, 'We shall talk with you frankly', *Ha-Biryon*, 5 (Apr. 1931). An original is kept at the Central Zionist Archive (CZA), PR-3693. See also Joseph Aḥime'ir and Shmuel Shatzky, eds., *Brit ha-Biryonim: the first anti-British organisation: documents and evidences* (Tel Aviv, 1978), pp. 40ff [in Hebrew].

³⁸ Brit ha-Biryonim, 'Jews! Zionists!', *Ha-Biryon* 5 (Apr. 1931).

³⁹ An advertisement in *Ha-Am*, 30 Apr. 1931. The Sheqel was the membership fee, which gave its owner the right to vote in the elections for the Zionist Organization's assembly.

Tschernichowski, the article argued, was responsible for the 'national renaissance' in Hebrew culture. Thanks to his romantic poems, 'lovers of culture had risen, removing the literary pile of ashes which had been covering the pearls of the nation's youth, thus revealing its national epic'.⁴⁰ It was not only the literary or the artistic value of his poems, but their unifying national force which was important.

IV

The day of elections to the Zionist Organization's assembly arrived, and for Joshua Heschel Yevin it was obvious that the socialists' and the liberals' way was one of deception and mystification. Born in 1891 in Vinnitsa, in today's Ukraine, Yevin first received traditional religious education and then went to the Hebrew gymnasium in Vilnius. He had then studied medicine at the University of Moscow, and during the Great War served as a military physician in the Russian army. After living for two years in Berlin, he migrated to Palestine in 1924. Like Aḥime'ir, he was first affiliated with the socialists and only gradually approached the Revisionist camp. In 1930, he became a member of the editorial board of *Ha-Am*.⁴¹

Yevin argued that socialist Zionist parties injected 'poison, heresy and despair into our systems', thus disintegrating the national body. The list of candidates supporting Ze'ev Jabotinsky, on the other hand, 'is not a list of a party; it is not just one Zionist stream among others, but the list of Zionism – Zionism, standing up and resurrecting everywhere'.⁴² In Yevin's view, no political space should have been left for other, competing ideologies. A similar claim was repeated two days later, as the results of the elections began to pour in. 'It turns out that in Palestine there are only two parties: Revisionist Zionism and the national element among the Mizraḥi'⁴³ on the one hand, versus Brit Shalom and the Left on the other.

The members of Brit Shalom were Zionist intellectuals concerned about the Arab problem and its potential repercussions. The group came into being in Jerusalem in late 1925. Among its prominent members were H. M. Kalvarisky, Arthur Ruppin, Hugo Bergmann, and Hans Kohn. The group's leading principle was that Palestine should be neither a Jewish nor an Arab state, but a bi-national state in which Jews and Arabs will enjoy equal civil, social, and political rights, without distinction between a 'majority'

⁴⁰ 'Shaul Tschernichowski: poet of Israeli renaissance' [no author], *Ha-Am*, 19 May 1931.

⁴¹ Aḥime'ir and Shatzky, eds., *Brit ha-Biryonim*, p. 40.

⁴² Joshua Yevin, 'The day of judgment', *Ha-Am*, 25 May 1931.

⁴³ The People's Soldier [in Hebrew: 'Ḥayal ha-ʿAm'; a pseudonym which was used for editorials], 'The elections to the congress: victory of the Revisionists', *Ha-Am*, 27–8 May 1931 (emphasis in the original). These editorials were usually written by Von Weisl, Yevin and Aḥime'ir. 'Mizraḥi' was a party of religious Zionists; for the recent analysis of the political history of this party, see Shelef, *Evolving nationalism*, chs. 2 and 4.

and a 'minority'. The group had no mass basis, and its political impact was negligible.⁴⁴

Probably contemplating a future alliance with its representatives in the Congress, *Ha-Am* promised the Mizrahi – a faction of religious Zionists – that 'the new, revised Zionism *views the whole people of Israel as one unit, without exception*, knowing to appreciate the full value of Hebrew religion and ritual'. From that point on, the editorial asserted, the road was paved for purging the Zionist Organization of undesirable elements, since

that was the last time the leeches had the budget, the money and the possibility to keep their delegates standing on their feet. Their end has come. The elections in January buried the center; the elections of May sealed its grave. But the elections of May also defeated Mapay ... The bankrupts are gone. Long live Revisionist Zionism!⁴⁵

The Revisionist press was cheerful. The prospects for a new era, free from annoying political opponents, seemed promising. A few days later, in an introduction to his interview with Şidqi Pasha, Egypt's prime minister, Wolfgang Von Weisl was also very amicable towards the Egyptian ruler, when quoting him as saying that 'the Wafd was ruling for years in a one-party dictatorship'.⁴⁶ From the tone of the paragraph, it is clear that Von Weisl did not oppose such a political system.

But the spring of joy was short: the newspaper was closed, by decree of the British authorities, during the Zionist Congress in Basel. 'We hereby inform our readers and subscribers that due to the command of the High Commissioner, the printing of *Ha-Am* has been stopped until further notice', the newspaper announced in a leaflet signed by its editorial board and managing committee.⁴⁷ The timing of the shut-down, one may assume, was not accidental: even if the British authorities did not deliberately try to influence the proceedings of the Congress in Basel – they actually did not have the ability to do that – they probably did not want to have a vociferous troublemaker in the form of a Revisionist newspaper during those tense days of the Zionist gathering.

The closure, however, was not too long, and the re-opening of the newspaper provided the Maximalists an excellent opportunity for making their claims public. 'For two weeks, the blue-white paper was not published', stated an editorial after a fortnight. 'The people did not feel satisfied with the other three

⁴⁴ Laqueur, *History of Zionism*, pp. 251–2.

⁴⁵ People's Soldier, 'The elections to the congress'. Mapay was the main socialist Zionist party at that time.

⁴⁶ Von Weisl, 'Interview with Şidqi Paşa', *Ha-Am*, 3–5 June 1931.

⁴⁷ *Message* (in the broadsheet format of the front page), 16 June 1931.

papers, since one of them is red, the second is gray and the third – yellow.’⁴⁸ For two weeks, *Ha-Am*’s editorial argued, there was

an ‘idyll’: the clerks could be sure that no one will provide the public with new details about the corruption and the waste of funds – because the emissaries of the socialist [sic] government shut the mouth of Zionism . . . but now the Zionist word of Herzl-Jabotinsky lives again! The Zionist heart and consciousness beat again!

But even if Revisionism had won that battle, the war was not over yet, since ‘the sword of closure is still hanging above the newspaper, for many wish to see it shut down’. This array of enemies was great and varied. It included Arabist nationalists, the British government, socialist and liberal Zionists. ‘Many people addressed us and asked when will the newspaper be back in print’, the article informed the readers, finding also the reason for that: ‘for *Ha-Am* is more than just a party paper, more than a one-stream newspaper. *Ha-Am* delivers the voice of the whole community in Palestine.’ In other words: Revisionist Zionism is the only political truth, to which all other ideological factions and groups should adapt.

The Congress in Basel was the high point of a crisis atmosphere. ‘For eight years I have been living in Palestine’, said Uri Zvi Grünberg in his speech at the congress, ‘constantly hearing that “dialectic of windmills” about Realpolitik and “creating and building” – and we have reached a complete catastrophe.’⁴⁹ His clear conclusion was that the Hebrew community in Palestine at the time needed ‘a union of brotherhood and salvation – and we believe it is possible’.⁵⁰

The Revisionist secession from the Zionist Organization, at that Congress, paved the road towards the establishment of an independent Revisionist organization, long aspired to and promoted by the activist wing within the movement. Aḥimeir found this was the right time for a long, detailed historical review of political Zionism, whose most authentic bearer, in his view, was Revisionism. Aḥimeir did not want to establish a new organization based on the same principles of the old one, but rather a new organization with new principles, ‘which fit the new spirit of Revisionist Zionism’.

This extreme political move forced Aḥimeir to refer to the evident contradiction between the movement’s declared aspiration to unify the nation

⁴⁸ The People’s Diary [editorial], ‘Ha-Am is again in print’, *Ha-Am*, 2 July 1931. The ‘red’ newspaper was *Davar*, Mapay’s official daily; the ‘gray’ is *Ha-Aretz*, the liberal newspaper which was seen as affiliated to the General Zionist party; the ‘yellow’ was *Do’ar ha-Yom*, Itamar Ben Avi’s private newspaper, which was considered a cheap tabloid, and with which the Revisionists were already embroiled by that time.

⁴⁹ ‘The full speech of U. Z. Grünberg’, *Ha-Am*, 17 July 1931. The 17th Zionist Congress convened in Basel between 30 June and 15 July 1931.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* Uri Zvi Grünberg (1896–1981) was born in Galicia. After serving in the Austro-Hungarian army during the First World War, he was living in Warsaw and Berlin. By the time of his migration to Palestine in 1923, he was already a known and cherished poet in Hebrew and Yiddish. Like Aḥimeir, he soon left the socialist circles with which he was affiliated and joined Jabotinsky’s Revisionist Zionism. See Aḥimeir and Shatzky, eds., *Brit ha-Biryonim*, p. 33.

on the one hand, and the practical political act of breaking the lines on the other. He therefore argued that 'not every union is a sign of power, and not every splitting is a sign of weakness'. Aḥimeir's explanation was that the contemporary political struggle within Zionism – as all around the world – was a generational one, and therefore unavoidable: social change was essential and qualitative, tearing apart the basic fabric of modern societies. After millions of young people lost their lives in the Great War and the Russian Revolution,

generations replaced classes. The youth now demands its due, 'taking revenge' of the generation which was sitting at home during the years of disaster ... the war between liberalism and socialism on the one hand and communism and fascism on the other is a war between fathers and sons. In Israel too, a war is waged between official Zionism ... and young, poor, 'working Palestine', concentrated around Revisionist Zionism. This is a fathers–sons war as well.⁵¹

That deep change affected the national consciousness. 'Before the war, nationalism belonged to the bourgeoisie, whereas the hungry cared for cosmopolitan ideals', but after the war came

Italian fascism, raising the prestige of the youth – whose bones are scattered over all the battlefields, in Europe and beyond it. A synthesis was created between class and nation, a national revolutionary movement and a proletarian revolutionary movement. And if this is the case among other nations, then even more in Israel, for by no other nation or tongue is the national idea so revolutionary and popular as in the Israeli nation; no other nation is so deeply betrayed by its magnates as our nation.⁵²

The political struggle, in other words, was not between different parts within the nation, but between those who care for the nation and fight for it – and those who betrayed it.⁵³ Needless to mention, the Revisionists, in Aḥimeir's opinion, belonged to the former.

This became the clear new line of Revisionist activists: from that point on, their desire for national integration was juxtaposed against the fragmented

⁵¹ Aḥimeir, 'The aims of Revisionist Zionism', *Ha-Am*, 5 Aug. 1931.

⁵² *Ibid.* The term 'nation' was used by the Revisionists in a confusing way, at times referring to Jews, and at times to the Hebrew community in Palestine. This double meaning – evident until today in Israeli politics – was cut only about a decade later, by members of the NMO in Israel and their ideological affiliates; see the following discussion about Abraham Stern and his distinction between 'Jews' and 'Hebrews'.

⁵³ The debate within the Revisionist movement in favour of the secession and against it made a whole distinct episode. One should note, however, that Jabotinsky, as the leader of the Revisionist party, continuously and consistently denied the possibility of taking the power by force or using any violent methods within the Zionist organization. Jabotinsky made it clear a few weeks later in his article 'Independence or extinction', *Migdalor* ['Lighthouse' in Hebrew], 11 Sept. 1931. This double refusal – both to compromise and to use violent methods in order to take over the Zionist organization – was probably an important factor in his decision to secede.

tendencies of other political parties. 'Revisionist Zionism in Palestine – like all around the world – is not the movement of the wealthy', because it unifies 'the youth, the worker, the artisan and the Zionist intelligentsia'.⁵⁴ In the view of Maximalist activists, from that moment on, Revisionist Zionism ceased to be a Zionist party; it became an alternative to the entire Zionist organization as a whole.

Following this line of thought, it is no wonder, therefore, that those who opposed Revisionist views were perceived as betraying the nation. The best-known example thereof was probably Judah Leon Magnes, the chancellor of the Hebrew University at that time. Together with members of Brit Shalom, he was simply marked as 'a traitor'.⁵⁵ The attempt by Magnes to name the chair for international relations, held by Prof. Norman Bentwich, 'The Chair for International Peace', triggered furious protests among the Maximalists. Commenting on the speech delivered by Bentwich at the Chair's inauguration ceremony, in which he differentiated between divine Jerusalem and earthly Jerusalem – praising the former – Aḥimeir claimed that Bentwich is 'not only an extreme assimilationist . . . but also a Christian missionary, objectively'.⁵⁶

Bentwich's was the most famous, but not the only, case in which *Ḥazit ha-Am* warned its readership about 'the damage caused by the infiltration of internationalist ideas'. Such was the danger among the 'Jewish' farmers in Palestine, who preferred employing 'Arab' rather than 'Jewish' workers. *Ḥazit ha-Am* argued that these farmers were thus establishing 'a kind of a "Fourth International", whose goals are harmful and dangerous for Zionism, because they create unemployment and cause hunger among the pioneers, while the hands of foreigners are full of work'. The desired situation was the employment of 'Jews' (i.e. Zionists) only. The newspaper declared one should fight against this 'Fourth International' just as one should fight against the Second and the Third Internationals, 'for one has to put an end to this alienation among many farmers in our country towards the Jewish pioneer'.⁵⁷

In Yevin's opinion, the problem was not Magnes and the pacifist members of Brit Shalom – who were 'very consequent and true' with their beliefs – but with

⁵⁴ 'The adventures of the Revisionist newspaper in Palestine' [no author], *Migdalor*, 11 Sept. 1931.

⁵⁵ 'Following the troubles at the college: anger in Tel Aviv regarding the scandal on Mount Traitors', *Ḥazit ha-Am*, 16 Feb. 1932. However, although Magnes was one of the authors of Brit Shalom's political programme and a strong supporter of its activity, he did not become an official member of the group. See Norman Bentwich, *For Zion's sake: a biography of Judah L. Magnes, first chancellor and first president of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem* (Philadelphia, PA, 1954), p. 185.

⁵⁶ Abba Siqra' [pseudonym of Aḥime'ir], 'Bentwich the assimilationist – and the missionary', *Ḥazit ha-Am*, 19 Feb. 1932.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* The article specifically criticizes Smilansky, the editor of *Bustenay*, the farmers' association's journal.

the Zionist leaders who co-operate with them and let them 'control' the University, and the Revisionists who let this happen:

If after these things no purging takes place on Mount Scopus; if we do not act now and finally remove off the stage this *Stab*, which is stabbing his dagger in the back of this tortured and persecuted people; if we don't shut down this branch of Yevseksiya on Mount Scopus – then *we* shall be considered as criminals, not Magnes.⁵⁸

The people, hence, is in a war of last resort, for life and death. In such a situation, 'the presence among us of these traitors, who are willing to shake the bloody hands of Hebron's murderers on our behalf – this presence does not only put us in danger; it renders the war lost in advance'.⁵⁹ Considering this great danger, Yevin stressed that this time, he does not want to address either the Revisionists or members of various socialist or liberal parties, but just 'Jews! Yes, simple Jews – all of you . . . if you still have time to prepare – be very awake! Do not fall asleep before the great thunder! We have some more time, so let's take advantage of it, and purify our camp from these traitors.'⁶⁰ *Ḥazit ha-ʿAm* continued using the hostility towards Magnes and Bentwich as a vehicle for mobilizing the public in a campaign for political integration. 'The national-Zionist commandment commits us to fight, without any concession or compromise, for the purging of the Mount Scopus college from betrayal and denial', stated an editorial in the newspaper. 'It is about time for the younger generation to take the flag of *Hebrew community* from those who hold it with their dirty hands, for it is about time to purify the land of all the impurity and filth in our *Hebrew-Missionary* institutions.'⁶¹

After 'reminding' the socialist Zionists how their leadership reacted twenty years earlier in disputes about academic and national issues,⁶² the editor of *Ḥazit ha-ʿAm* declared that 'today as well, dire needs oblige us to *purify the hall of*

⁵⁸ Joshua Yevin, 'Be awake!', *Ḥazit ha-ʿAm*, 23 Feb. 1932 (my emphasis). Yevin used the German word 'Stab' – meaning a crew, or a team working together – in the original Hebrew article.

⁵⁹ Ibid. The term 'Hebron's murderers' refers to the leaders of the Arab community in Palestine, held responsible for the August 1929 riots. On 23 August 1929, a series of demonstrations and small clashes between Jewish and Muslim believers in Jerusalem lead to a short yet deadly wave of riots, murders, and – as happened in the city of Hebron – massacres. Within a week, 240 people were killed and about 570 were reported injured. See Segev, *One Palestine, complete*, pp. 327ff. For a recent assessment of the wider social context of the riots, see Timothy Wilson, 'Turbulent stasis: comparative reflections upon intercommunal violence and territoriality in the Israel/Palestine conflict', *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 19 (2013), pp. 58–79.

⁶⁰ Yevin, 'Be awake!'. Yevin paraphrases on Deuteronomy 23, 9–14.

⁶¹ 'How did they once fight against the Sanbalats of culture?' [editorial], *Ḥazit ha-ʿAm*, 15 Mar. 1932 (my emphasis).

⁶² The article quoted the socialist press of 1913–14, demonstrating how the socialist parties were vehemently opposed to the initiative to institute German as the official teaching language at the Polytechnic School in Haifa, arguing that the same could be said in 1932 against Magnes and Bentwich in Jerusalem. About the 'war of languages' of 1913–1914 see Arieh Bruce Saposnik, *Becoming Hebrew: the creation of a Jewish national culture in Ottoman Palestine* (Oxford, 2008), ch. 10. For the wider context within Hebrew education, see Bernard Spolsky

impurity on Mount Scopus. Because in this moment of great danger to our existence, sevenfold dangerous are the blows which pour on us from within.’⁶³ Considering what the Maximalists perceived as the socialist and liberal indifference towards the pacifist danger, Revisionist Zionism was perceived as fighting the war of the entire people. ‘We, supporters of rebellious Zionism, fighting the war of the youth who stands underneath our flag, against all Zionism’s enemies, are simultaneously representing the entire people’, wrote Yevin. It is the entire people’s war that the Revisionists are waging, both against its external enemies ‘and those depriving it of its rights internally’.⁶⁴

Ahime’ir made the same point clear in his speech at the Revisionist world conference in Vienna, at the beginning of September that year. ‘Democracy has been defeated everywhere ... more than that: it has gone bankrupt ... what other proof do you need?’, he rhetorically asked his audience. He concluded that following the Great War, ‘this century is the century of youth and dictatorship’, not of the old, failed democracies. ‘What I bring you’, he declared, ‘is a new social form, free of principles and party’.⁶⁵

V

And, indeed, this notion of the creation of a new social form was taking root in Hebrew society also in its perception of the global political sphere. ‘The objective historian would see the Italian fascism as the most important phenomenon of the twentieth century.’ This was the opinion of the editor of Benito Mussolini’s first biography in Hebrew, published in 1936 in Tel Aviv. In his opinion, no objective historian would deny that Italian fascism ‘has the abundant treasure of national vigour, which brought a failed, subjected and suppressed people towards great deeds – those deeds which made Italy one of the strongest superpowers in the world’.⁶⁶ But the publication of that book was not only for the sake of learned academic analysis. On the practical level, its editor was convinced that

there is a lesson to be taken from this Italy. Especially we, the Jews, who haven’t yet learned how to elevate the national idea to the degree of a monotheistic belief, which is the only criterion for measuring our life – must learn the wonders that the fascist movement has created, mostly in the national sphere.⁶⁷

and Elana Shohamy, ‘Language in Israeli society and education’, *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 137 (1999), pp. 93–114.

⁶³ ‘How did they once fight against the Sanbalats of culture?’ [editorial] (my emphasis).

⁶⁴ Yevin, ‘We fight the people’s war’, *Ḥazit ha-Am*, 29 July 1932. The article was aimed against liberal and socialist Zionist leaders. Specifically, Yevin mentions Robert Weltsch and Kurt Blumenfeld. Weltsch (1891–1982) was chief editor of the *Jüdische Rundschau* in Berlin; Blumenfeld (1884–1963) was at the time head of the Zionist Union of Germany.

⁶⁵ Ahime’ir, ‘The speech of Ahime’ir’, *Ḥazit ha-Am*, 13 Sept. 1932.

⁶⁶ Zvi Kolitz, *Mussolini: his personality and doctrine* (Tel Aviv, 1936), p. 6.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

This biography of Mussolini was written by Zvi Kolitz, a member of Beitar. Born in Lithuania in 1912, Kolitz migrated with his family to Palestine at a young age. During the 1930s, he studied at the University of Florence and at the Naval School of Beitar in Civitavecchia. Immediately upon his return to Palestine, in the mid-1930s, he became a member of the National Military Organization.⁶⁸

Kolitz's admiration of Mussolini and the way he strengthened Italian nationality was blatant. 'Already during his "leftist" period, Mussolini was not impressed by the idea of elections and decisive majority', he wrote. 'For him, elections are just a means, while the aim is different: the nation, its unification, consolidation, welfare, and strength.'⁶⁹ Referring to the first laws of corporations – enacted in January 1927 – Kolitz opined that

strikes and closures are a *national crime*, and become impossible and unnecessary according to these laws ... the state – and only the state – is the sole organizer, manager and commander of all walks of life within it ... there are no classes within the people! The entire people is one class, one movement, one aspiration and one aim.⁷⁰

Enchanted by Italian corporatism, Kolitz concluded that 'the worker and the employer, the soldier and the General – all are *producers*. Each and every citizen ... plays a role of production as a part of the gigantic machine of Mussolini's state.'⁷¹ Kolitz did not explain how is it possible to live in Italy *without* the state which is omnipresent, integrating all citizens into one organic society. His book, though, was reviewed quite favourably by the Revisionist press. Repeating almost exactly what Aḥime'ir wrote four years earlier, Shalom Rosenfeld reminded his readers in his review of the book that the nineteenth century was the century 'of liberalism, individualism and fraternity', whereas the current century, in contrast, is one of nationalism, authority, and – last but not least – the great personality.⁷²

The traditions and conditions of Italian society were different from those of the Hebrew one, and accordingly also the measures to be taken in order to integrate it. But the ideal was the same nonetheless, and became ever clearer towards the end of the decade. 'Another question coming up all the more forcefully and of greater importance these perturbed days is the question of national unity', wrote Abraham Stern, one of Kolitz's fellow students from Florence and a close friend of Uri'el Halperin, the deputy editor of *Ha-Yarden* at that time, in one of the notebooks which were found in his apartment after his

⁶⁸ During the division of the NMO, Kolitz did not follow Abraham Stern, but rather went with David Razi'el and joined the British army during the Second World War. After the war, Kolitz migrated to North America and made a successful career as a film and theatre producer. He died in America in 2002.

⁶⁹ Kolitz, *Mussolini*, p. 19.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 65 (emphasis in the original).

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 67 (emphasis in the original).

⁷² Shalom Rosenfeld, 'Mussolini – with the publication of the book by Zvi Kolitz', *Ha-Yarden*, 20 Nov. 1936. *Ha-Yarden* was the Revisionist movement's newspaper after *Hazit ha-Am* was closed by an order of the British government.

murder. The official leaders of the Hebrew community, who ‘talk about unity dawn and dusk’ are lying, he asserted after his secession from the National Military Organization. ‘They speak about unity, but think about separation.’⁷³ The NMO in Israel, on the other hand, aims towards ‘a national unity around the flag of the movement for Hebrew liberty. Unity of the hearts, unity of acts, unity of the target and unity of means.’⁷⁴

Stern clearly saw a process of generating the Hebrew people out of the Jewish one. In his writings – and the publications of the NMO in Israel until his murder – the distinction gradually became clear between ‘Jews’ all around the world and Hebrews in Palestine. In his view,

the evacuation of the Jewish masses out of Europe is a precondition for solving the Jewish question, which may become possible only by the resettlement of these masses back in the homeland of the Jewish people, in Palestine, and by establishing the State of the Jews within its historical borders.⁷⁵

This way of ‘solving the Jewish problem’ while ‘liberating the Jewish people once and for all’ was ‘the aim of the political activity and the years old battle of the Israelite liberty movement’.⁷⁶

For Stern, then, the process of national integration was, to a large extent, a process of change, from *Jews* into *Hebrews*. ‘It is no coincidence that the Nazi movement, which had until now shown a great talent for seeing things, saw the Hebrew people [world Jewry] as a force aiming to take over the world’, he wrote:

One cannot rule out the possibility that if all the astounding talents of the world’s Jews, their conquering vigour, their outstanding stubbornness and their universal knowledge all concentrated in one channel and aimed at taking the power – the people of Israel would have been one of the greatest peoples in the world.⁷⁷

⁷³ Abraham ‘Yair’ Stern (1907–42) was the founder and the leader of the National Military Organization in Israel, a group of NMO activists who refused to comply with the organization’s ceasefire with the British rulers with the outbreak of the Second World War. Stern’s group preferred to continue its struggle against the British. For two years, the organization carried out underground attacks against British targets, until Stern was located, arrested, and murdered by the police. A worshipping biography of Stern, full of admiration and rich in details, is Israel Eldad’s ‘The poem of his life’, a preface to Stern’s collected poems and letters *In my blood, forever live! Poems, articles, letters* (Tel Aviv, 2002) [in Hebrew]. Eldad was one of Stern’s disciples, and one of his group’s commanders after his assassination. A longer biography, still positive though to a lesser degree of enthusiasm, was written by Ada Amichal Yevin, *In purple: the life of Yair – Abraham Stern* (Tel Aviv, 1986) [in Hebrew]. A less enchanted tale of Stern’s life can be found in Joseph Heller, *The Stern gang: ideology, politics and terror, 1940–1949* (London, 1995), passim.

⁷⁴ Abraham Stern, draft in his notebook, probably written during 1940 or 1941. CZA, A 549\65\44.

⁷⁵ *Grundlage des Vorschlages der Nationalen Militärischen Organisation in Palästina (Irgun Zewai Leumi) betreffend der Lösung der jüdischen Frage Europas und der aktiven Teilnahme der N.M. O. Am Kriege an der Seite Deutschlands*, JA, K-5/4/1.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* Originally in German ‘israelitischen’.

⁷⁷ Stern, draft in his notebook, CZA, A 549\65\44.

Whatever the desired social processes were, they should be all encompassing. Stern's conclusion was that if one wishes to 'redeem the whole public, the people, one cannot redeem only one party or class'.⁷⁸

Still, in political practice, Stern found that there is no place for 'an artificial unity in the format of adding a representative [to a unified national leadership]. Despite the desired unity, the NMO in Israel should keep its independence.'⁷⁹ In this, he faced the same dilemma as Aḥime'ir and Yevin had faced about a decade earlier: a dilemma between the wish to integrate the whole society on the one hand, and the refusal to make any compromise on the other.

For Stern, 'Unity and Unification' were not 'something external, mechanical, the joining of humans, a technical thing—but organic, natural unity; maintaining one single idea'.⁸⁰ His basic vision seems like a Hebrew translation of Mussolini's political platform. 'When we have the reins of power', he promised, 'the whole people, including its soldiers and workers, will live life of dignity and liberty in the free homeland.'

An interesting point is the making up of the people—especially when considering his referring to 'Jews' as the national basis. 'Our Hebrew government', Stern asserted, 'shall do great works for the benefit of the Land *and its inhabitants*'—not only 'the Jewish people'.⁸¹ We may assume that this phrasing was not accidental.

However, Stern did not even try to hide his political role models. The NMO, he asserted, believed that 'a community of interests⁸² may be established between the attempt to enact a new order in Europe according to the German concept, and the real national aspirations of the Jewish people, which are represented by the NMO'. Hence 'a cooperation between New Germany and a renewed, popular-national Hebrewness⁸³ would be possible'. Therefore, 'the Israelite liberty movement' offered 'active participation in the war on the German side', with the aim of 'establishing the historical State of the Jews on national and totalitarian principles'.⁸⁴

In order to understand this last radicalization in Stern's ideology, one has to dwell a moment on the ideas of Adolf Gurevicz. These are central here, since his ideas, which were crystallized already in the mid-1930s, provided the basis and the structure for Stern's leap out of Zionism.

Born to a wealthy family in Kiev in 1907, Adolf Gurevicz graduated in an Italian high school in Turin in 1924. He then continued his studies in Paris,

⁷⁸ Idem, CZA, A 549(65)75.

⁷⁹ Idem, CZA, A 549(65)44.

⁸⁰ Idem, CZA, A 549(65)83. Next to this sentence, however, Stern writes that full unity will not exist, due to 'polarity of the people', admitting that different opinions may remain.

⁸¹ Idem, CZA, A 549(65)55 (my emphasis).

⁸² Originally in German, *Interessengemeinschaft*.

⁸³ Originally in German, *völkisch-nationalen Hebräertum*.

⁸⁴ *Grundlage des Vorschlages der Nationalen Militärischen Organisation in Palästina*, JA, K-5/4/1. In 'NMO' Stern referred here to the NMO *in Israel*, not to the bigger organization, from which he detached himself.

where he met Eri Jabotinsky, the Revisionist leader's son. The two students became good friends, and Gurevicz joined the Revisionist party. By 1930, Gurevicz was already a fully devoted Hebrew scholar, whose vision was the writing of a new, secular, Hebrew history, purged of the Jewish interpretation enfolded into it for generations. In 1931, he published a series of short articles in the Revisionist press in Paris – articles which were partially translated and published in *Hazit ha-Am* – arguing that all ancient dwellers of Canaan – the Phoenicians, Israelites, Judeans, and Carthaginians as well – were Hebrews, of which nowadays Jewish communities are just a small remnant.⁸⁵ True to his secular anti-Jewish beliefs, he quit the Revisionist movement four years later, when Ze'ev Jabotinsky declared the building of alliance with religious Zionists – the Mizrahi – at the inauguration conference of the New Zionist Organization in Vienna, in September 1935.

However, Gurevicz and Jabotinsky remained in touch on a personal basis. Then, in 1938, another Revisionist activist, Uri'el Halperin – later known, as a poet, by the name Jonathan Ratoš – came to study in Paris too. Halperin's stay in Paris was not long, but enough to make him acquainted with the uncompromising, anti-Jewish – and, actually, anti-Zionist – ideas of Gurevicz, who sought to establish a new secular Hebrew nation in Palestine, which would sever all its contacts and relations with Judaism. Gurevicz published his ideas in a series of booklets named 'Shem: Revue d'Action Hébraïque'. Upon his return to Palestine, Halperin brought at least one of these leaflets to his friend Abraham Stern.⁸⁶ This booklet, bearing the subtitle 'people without land – land without people', was one of the few papers found on the latter's desk on the day he was murdered.⁸⁷

While Zionists saw the developments in Canaan as a break within Jewish history, Gurevicz and Halperin saw the establishment of an independent state as a break from Judaism altogether, 'a reality which imposes on today's Jews a mission totally different from the *chimères* of the Jewish mission',⁸⁸ fixing and repairing an old failure, which was ongoing since 'the Hebrew nation, which was one of the strongest in the ancient world became a Jewish caste', back in the time of Hellenist rule in Palestine.⁸⁹

The idea that the national principle is the only one able to assure collectives of worthy human life was common to many Revisionists, including Jabotinsky himself. However, Gurevicz, Halperin, and Stern did not perceive Judaism as a nationality; therefore, Jews have to abandon being Jewish in order to become

⁸⁵ Jabotinsky, 'Israel and Carthage', *Hazit ha-Am*, 5 Feb. 1932. Jabotinsky did not mention Gurevicz by name, but by the pseudonym 'Al-Raed' [in Arabic: 'The Scout'] which Gurevicz used for his articles in *Razsvjet*.

⁸⁶ On the relations between Stern, Gurevicz, and Halperin see Yaacov Shavit, *The new Hebrew nation: a study in Israeli heresy and fantasy* (London, 1987), pp. 23–36, 53–7.

⁸⁷ G. Beliac [Adolf Gurevicz], 'Peuple sans terre – terre sans peuple', in *Shem: revue d'action Hébraïque* (Paris, 1938).
⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 22.
⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

worthy humans once again.⁹⁰ Through this process, the Jews, who are dispersed and weak – and do not comprise a nation, but an ‘impalpable cloud’ – would be integrated into one modern nation.⁹¹

But what nation should the Jews become? Gurevicz argued that one cannot arbitrarily choose his nation, and the only nation the Jews can become is the Hebrew one. For this, they must have (a) a land of their own, (b) their own language, and (c) a culture, or *façon de vivre* in Gurevicz's words.⁹²

Actually, these three elements – land, language, and culture – were already alive and kicking in the Hebrew Yishuv in Palestine at that time. Gurevicz and his fellow Hebrews were just the only ones who overtly preached for a split between the old Jewish ‘impalpable cloud’ and the new Hebrew nation, which should be comprised of transformed old Jews, whatever their origin:

The front which the Jewish mobilisation must support and nourish is in Canaan. All the efforts made in order to maintain a campaign against antisemitism or to place refugees no matter where – all these efforts are in vain. All the Jewish efforts must be dedicated to providing the Hebrew youth of Canaan with the means of maintaining victoriously the combat imposed on it.⁹³

Thus, Gurevicz was laying the ideological basis for Stern's secession of 1939–40, and the establishment of the nativist NMO *in Israel*. Therefore, German fascism's clear anti-Judaism made it lose its attractive power among those still seeing themselves as Jews, in June 1933 at the latest; but for those who considered themselves the avant-garde of the *Hebrew* nation, anti-Judaism did not seem to be a problem. Italian fascism, on the other hand, remained a desired model also among ‘Jews’, until the enactment of anti-Jewish legislation there in 1938.

We can conclude, therefore, that the desired social integration, which reached its most extreme form in Stern's view at that time, had two aspects. First was the transformation of the Jewish diaspora into a local Hebrew society, defined not by its ethnic or religious traditions, but by its land and language. Hence, the second aspect: since the land is given and a language can be easily learned, the full desired integration included the merging of all the inhabitants of Palestine, not only the ‘Jews’, into this society.⁹⁴

VI

The need for close integration of a purer national community, a key characteristic of fascist movements, was clearly expressed in the writings of Maximalist Revisionists during the 1920s and 1930s. Already in 1922, the fascist seizure of power and the fascists' intention to consolidate Italian society were

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁹⁴ These two aspects cohabited later among ‘Israel's Liberty's Fighters’, the organization established by Stern's followers after his murder, under Nathan Yellin-Mor and Israel Eldad. See Heller, *Stern Gang*, pp. 111–22.

perceived by the liberal writers of *Do'ar ha-Yom* as the right answer to the political threat posed by communism.

In 1928, the newspaper began to take a more nationalist direction. Abba Aḥime'ir saw the liberals becoming accustomed to communist activity as a part of the communist threat. He preached, therefore, for combat against all the political streams which were not nationalist enough – liberals, socialists, and communists alike. Ben Avi, on his part, concentrated his appeal for integration in the cultural sphere, admonishing the use of foreign languages.

However, even the riots and massacres of August 1929 – and the ensuing Passfield's White Paper of 1930⁹⁵ – did not create the 'union of brotherhood and salvation' anticipated by Grünberg and his fellows. Actually, the secession from the Zionist Organization in 1931 proved to be a step in the opposite direction. Yevin's call for 'simple Jews' to join them did not help much: the Maximalists remained a small minority.

Also unsuccessful was Stern's call for 'national unity of the hearts, unity of acts, unity of the target and unity of means'. His group remained marginal even within the Revisionist camp. His vision of integration remained secluded within his group's messianic-futuristic manifesto, *The eighteen principles of Renaissance*. Far-reaching as it was – envisioning not only integration of an existing people but actually the creation of a new one – it bore no practical fruit.

Two main tensions continually accompanied the idea of integration preached by the members of the Hebrew fascist milieu. Although the severity of these tensions increased and decreased alternately during the 1920s and 1930s, they remained unsolved.

The first was between the Maximalists' desire to force integration on the Hebrew society in Palestine into one – by violence, if needed – and the *liberal* convictions of Jabotinsky, the leader they admired. In April 1931, for example, Aḥime'ir, as a representative of Brit ha-Biryonim, preached in favour of uncompromising national integration; that very same week – as a columnist in *Ha-Am* – he wrote an article praising the parliamentary politics of Disraeli.⁹⁶

The second tension was between the wish for stronger integration of Hebrew society on the one hand and the difficulty of making compromises – even tactical ones – in order to achieve this aim on the other. Finding the balance between the desire for national integration and the need to maintain a proud,

⁹⁵ See n. 59 above. Following the riots, the British government appointed a commission – known as the 'Hope-Simpson Commission' – whose task was to investigate the causes of the violent eruption. The investigation's result was the publication of a new statement of policy, issued on 20 Oct. 1930, by the colonial secretary Sidney Webb, Lord Passfield – a statement soon named after him. Suggesting limitations on Jewish immigration to Palestine, this paper was viewed by Zionists as a fundamental change in the former British official political guidelines, known as 'The Churchill White Paper' of 1922.

⁹⁶ For a detailed analysis of Revisionist and Maximalist perceptions of the political role of leaders and leadership, see Dan Tamir, "'Dictate more, for we should obey your orders!': cult of the leader in interwar Hebrew fascism', *Politics, Religion and Ideology*, 14 (2013), pp. 449–67.

uncompromising policy was not an easy task for the Maximalists; 'promoting Israel's unity in Palestine', as Wolfgang von Weisl defined it, required taking part in 'a game of agreed-upon lies' – a thing they refused to do. Hence, a deep political dilemma, which they continually faced.

Despite continuous appraisal of strong integration and contempt towards unwanted liberal and socialist elements, the majority of the public was not convinced. The Maximalist cow wanted to provide more than the Hebrew calf was willing to drink. In this aspect, Hebrew society in Palestine was no different from its neighbours. As Israel Gershoni showed, the support for Nazism and Fascism in Egypt was less than previously presumed. The prevalent mood in Egyptian politics of that time, Gershoni argues, was 'democratic discourse'.⁹⁷ While marginal political currents expressed admiration towards Hitler's and Mussolini's policies and called for the adoption of fascist practices by Arab and Egyptian societies, the mainstream of Egyptian public opinion rejected fascism and nazism. Egyptian political actors who opposed democracy were not automatically embracing fascism: such were members of the Efendiyya, the Muslim Brotherhood, and constitutional liberals.⁹⁸

In Lebanon, the situation was somewhat different. The 1930s saw the establishment of two political forces which can be considered of the same generic ilk. The Kata'eb, first recruited by Pierre Gemayel in 1936, were inspired by the Spanish model of a young, vital militia. The Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP), established by Antun Sa`ada in 1932, intended to imitate the German party bearing a similar name. Both are still active today. While the SSNP was and remained a marginal political factor, the Kata'eb have played a significant role in Lebanese politics since then. Their political ascension, however, took place parallel to a process of institutionalization and relative moderation, as they became one Lebanese militia among many, practically identified with the Christian Maronite community of the country.⁹⁹

The ideal of a unified, highly integrated society – both economically and politically – was part of a wider European fascist view of the need to revitalize decadent modern society. In Britain, for instance, the economic depression in the 1930s made several politicians besides fascists think along corporatist lines, although their corporatism did not recognize the need for a fascist party nor did it perceive any 'internal enemy' within British society. In contrast, Oswald Mosley's espousal of corporatism during that period was directly influenced by Mussolini's corporate state in Italy. What attracted Mosley to the Italian model

⁹⁷ Israel Gershoni, *Egypt and fascism, 1922–1937* (Tel Aviv, 1999), pp. 11–14 [in Hebrew].

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 336–49. In English, see Israel Gershoni and James Jankowski, *Confronting fascism in Egypt: dictatorship and democracy in the 1930s* (Stanford, CA, 2010).

⁹⁹ A good general review of the various reactions towards fascism in Lebanon and Syria during the 1930s is Götz Nordbruch, *Nazism in Syria and Lebanon: the ambivalence of the German option, 1933–1945* (Abingdon, 2009).

was probably not so much corporatism as what was enabling its implementation in contemporary Italy: Mussolini's totalitarian fascist state.¹⁰⁰

Anton Mussert's Dutch Nazi party promoted a political programme emphasizing corporatism, authoritarianism, and national solidarity. Mussert condemned Dutch parliamentary democracy and its practitioners, claiming they were corrupt, weak, and misguided politicians who had proven completely unable to confront the political and economic crises of the early 1930s, and who—in his opinion—helped perpetuate and even encouraged the class, regional, and denominational differences that had divided Dutch society. In contrast to this state of affairs, Mussert and his party sought 'a powerful state, self-respect of the nation, discipline, order, solidarity of all segments of the population and the precedence of general interests above group interests and group interests above personal interests'.¹⁰¹

In Spain, Primo de Rivera argued that the Falange was a movement that was neither of the left nor the right, born for the good of a Fatherland that could not be left 'in the hands of the strongest class or the best-organized party'. This *Patria* was 'a total unity, in which all individuals and all classes are integrated'. He expected his movement to create a state which should be the 'effective, authoritarian instrument at the service of an indisputable unity, of that permanent unity, of that irrevocable unity that is called *Patria*'.¹⁰²

Back in Palestine, in the Maximalists' opinion, the political process deemed necessary in order to change the public's unwillingness to collaborate with them had two phases. The first phase should have been a move from being a political party within society to providing a political alternative to all other political parties. The second imagined phase was a move from this polarized zero sum game into providing an alternative to the political system altogether.

This task was not an easy one. The Jewish public in Palestine was a heterogeneous community, comprised to a large extent of migrants of different nationalities, speaking different mother tongues. On the theoretical level, this created an ideological chasm between the Revisionist Maximalists and the Hebrews of Stern and Gurevich. With all their critique of the Zionist Organization, the Maximalists considered themselves as Zionists, and were connected to the Zionist movement. They regarded themselves as 'Jews', addressing a 'Jewish' people, which included—with only few exceptions—both Palestinian and European Jews. Their imagined nation included, in most accounts, a large world diaspora, and they were trying to appeal both to the

¹⁰⁰ Gary Love, "What's the big idea?": Oswald Mosley, the British Union of Fascists and generic fascism', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 42 (2007), pp. 447–68.

¹⁰¹ Jennifer Foray, 'An old empire in a new order: the global designs of the Dutch Nazi Party, 1931–1942', *European History Quarterly*, 43 (2013), pp. 27–52.

¹⁰² José Antonio Primo de Rivera, 'Discurso pronunciado en el Teatro de la Comedia de Madrid', in José Antonio Primo de Rivera, *Textos de doctrina política* (Madrid, 1971), pp. 61–9, quoted and translated into English in Zira Box and Ismael Saz, 'Spanish fascism as a political religion (1931–1941)', *Politics, Religion and Ideology*, 12 (2011), pp. 371–89.

Hebrew public in Palestine and to the wider constituency of the Revisionist Zionist party, whose majority at the time was in Poland.

In this aspect, it is little surprise that the most consistent advocates of integration were members of the NMO in Israel, who actually distanced themselves from both Zionism and Judaism, imagining *their* national community as territorial; hence their name, NMO *in Israel*. In other words: detachment from Zionism was a necessary – even if insufficient – precondition for consequent social and political integration in Palestine. Stern and Gurevitz intentionally referred to the Hebrew nation in Palestine, and regarded European Jews at the most as mere building blocks for the emerging Hebrew nation, Jews-to-become-Hebrews in Palestine.

On the practical level, however, Maximalist ideas too were confined to Palestine and its people. They wrote in Hebrew (and even fought for it in a bitter battle against Yiddish),¹⁰³ lived in Palestine, and acted against the British mandate regime there. Even their travels in Europe were aimed at raising support for activities in Palestine and at encouraging youngsters to join them in this land – and hence become Hebrews, *de facto* even if not *de iure*.

The desire for social integration was a key common denominator of modern fascist movements. But has it not also been a key element in other modern mass movements over the past two centuries, on the left as well? Was not the ultimate goal of Marx and many of his socialist and communist followers to create one unified state and society of workers? While this argument is valid, one should take note of two important points which mark the difference between the desired socialist integration and the desired fascist one. First, the desire for social integration per se does not make a movement fascist. This desire is just one of several characteristics – which Paxton names ‘mobilizing emotions’ – the combination of which makes a fascist movement. Secondly, while socialist movements first sought unity of class as a step on the path towards social improvement – either by a revolutionary change or by a gradual amelioration of society – fascists attempted to create a simultaneous unity of class and nation, as Abba Aḥimeir noticed quite precisely.¹⁰⁴

It should also be noted that race, in biological terms, was not part of Hebrew fascist intellectual formulations. While the perception of Arab nationalists as enemies was well established in its worldview, this perception did not have a racial context, but rather a cultural and political one. Furthermore, some of the proponents mentioned above were willing to co-operate with ‘Arabs’ much more than socialist Zionists did. Wolfgang von Weisl, for instance, wrote in 1935 in favour of a full alliance between Western Europe and a Middle Eastern

¹⁰³ See nn. 28 and 29 above.

¹⁰⁴ In August 1931, Aḥimeir claimed that a ‘synthesis was created between class and nation, a national revolutionary movement and a proletarian revolutionary movement’. Aḥimeir, ‘Aims of Revisionist Zionism’; see n. 51 above.

Islamic confederation.¹⁰⁵ Even more illustrative in this context is the worldview of Abraham Stern, who – willing and daring to voice extreme opinions and launch most unconventional initiatives – imagined the future Hebrew community in Palestine as made up of both Hebrewized Jews coming from abroad and of local non-Jewish inhabitants of the country.¹⁰⁶ This formulation of a national community based on language and territory rather than on ‘blood’ was present in the writings of Gurevitz, who rejected the misuse of the linguistic concept ‘Semitic’ as a racial term. Hebrew, in his view, is not the language of an ethnic group or a race, but the indigenous language of the people in the region, whatever their provenance.¹⁰⁷ This became even more blatant a few years later, in the Hebrew ideology of his friend Jonathan Ratoš.¹⁰⁸

That way or the other, the desired process of integration never actually took place, and remained theoretical – both before 1948 and after it – as the political and social conditions – both within Palestine and without it – changed quite dramatically. Hebrew fascists never managed to construct their aspired integrated society; neither did their political descendants. The untimely death of Jabotinsky in 1940, the murder of Stern in 1942, and the general collapse of the fascist Axis at the end of the Second World War all made the fascist option lose the shining glamour it enjoyed during the early and mid-1930s.

However, in their mere aspiration for such an integration and their admiration of an imagined integrated and organic society, Hebrew fascists were not different from their contemporary fascist thinkers and activists in other countries; both their dreams and their disappointment were similar to those of other fascist movements. This may be yet another proof of the fact that the political history of modern Hebrew society in Palestine is not inherently different from the histories of other contemporary Mediterranean societies.

¹⁰⁵ Essad Bey and Wolfgang von Weisl, *Allah ist Gross: Niedergang und Aufstieg der islamischen Welt von Abdul Hamid bis Ibn Saud* (Vienna, 1935), p. 346.

¹⁰⁶ Stern, draft in his notebook, probably written during 1941. CZA, A 549\65\55.

¹⁰⁷ A recent review of Ratoš and his ‘Canaanite’ worldview can be found in Klaus Hofmann, ‘Canaanism’, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 47 (2011), pp. 273–94.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* See also Boas Evron, *Jewish State or Israeli Nation?* (Bloomington, IN, 1995), pp. 205–22.