

ISRAEL

STUDIES IN ZIONISM AND THE STATE OF ISRAEL
HISTORY, SOCIETY, CULTURE

The Chaim Weizmann Institute for the Study of Zionism and Israel was set up in 1962 at Tel Aviv University through the initiative and with the assistance of the Executive of the World Zionist Organization, with the aim of furthering the research and the teaching of the history of the Zionist idea, the Zionist movement and the Land of Israel in modern times.

ISRAEL

STUDIES IN ZIONISM AND THE STATE OF ISRAEL
HISTORY, SOCIETY, CULTURE

No. 4, 2003



TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY
THE CHAIM ROSENBERG SCHOOL OF JEWISH STUDIES
THE CHAIM WEIZMANN INSTITUTE FOR THE
STUDY OF ZIONISM AND ISRAEL

Editor: Meir Chazan

Editorial Board: Avi Bareli, Nurith Gertz, Avner Horowitz,
Hannah Naveh, Shalom Ratzabi, David Tal

Style Editing: Shlomo Avayou
English Editing: Philippa Shimrat

© 2003

All Rights Reserved

Tel Aviv University

The Chaim Weizmann Institute for the Study of Zionism and Israel

Graphic Editing: Michal Semo, TAU's Graphic Design Studio

Printed in Israel at A.R.T. Offset Services Ltd.

CONTENTS

LETTER

A Hundred Years Since the Beginning of the Second Aliyah	1
---	---

ARTICLES

Images of the “Rear” among “Front-line” Combat Soldiers during the 1948 War	7
Mordechai Bar-On	
The Home Front and the Mobilization in the 1948 War	37
Moshe Naor	
The Evacuation of Non-Belligerents from the Border Areas in the Israeli War of Independence	61
David Tal	
The Lottery for the Plots of Ahuzat-Bayit: The Creation of an Urban Myth	83
Haim Fireberg	
Ritual Slaughter, Butchers and the Yemenis’ Position in the Moshavot’s Social and Economic Life	109
Bat-Zion Eraqi Klorman	
“Teenage” Citizens: The Youth Conference in Sheikh Munis — Conflict, Dialogue and Encounter	123
Paula Kabalo	
On the Altar of the Nation and the Homeland	155
Batya Brutin	
History and Zionism in the Thought of Nathan Rotenstreich	185
Ronny Miron	

COMMENT

On the Teaching of History	207
Ephrat Balberg Rotenstreich	

BOOK REVIEWS

<i>Rural Collective Settlement and Jewish Culture in Eretz Israel during the 1920s,</i> by Moti Zeira	213
Shula Keshet	
<i>The Road to Jerusalem; Glubb Pasha, Palestine and the Jews,</i> by Benny Morris	217
Asher Susser	
<i>Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East,</i> by Michael B. Oren	223
Matitiahu Mayzel	
List of Contributors	231
English Summaries	VII

Summaries

Mordechai Bar-On

Images of the “Rear” among “Front-line” Combat Soldiers during the 1948 War

During the first five months of the war (December 1947–April 1948), in which irregular militias from both sides of the conflict were involved in the fighting, the distinction between “front” and “rear” could hardly be made. Much of the violence took place along shifting lines inside cities of mixed population or through attacks on primarily civilian land traffic and assaults on villages in which civilians were heavily exposed to acts of violence. However, from mid-April, when the Jewish forces began to carve out large and more or less contiguous stretches of territory, and more so from mid-May, when the regular forces of the neighboring Arab states joined the fray, more distinct battle lines were formed and, except for Jerusalem and some isolated rural outposts, these lines were drawn at a growing distance away from the bulk of the Jewish population.

Along with the growing distance between combat soldiers and civilians and the heavy intensification of the war, a distinct self-image evolved, especially among the fighting units, which could be traced in popular songs, jokes and in many speech idioms. The soldiers felt a strong urge to highlight their new identity as combat fighters and compensate themselves for the hardships, dangers and often painful sacrifices they were required to make, in sharp distinction to the “people having a good time in the rear.” This perception generated a strong consciousness of being a unique community of the “chosen” — those who became “the silver platter on which the Jewish people received their statehood.”

This article explores the diverse expressions of this phenomenon, drawing on a wealth of material published at the time or soon after the end of the war, including letters and memories written by soldiers, reports of war correspondents, as well as prose and poetry of the time.

Moshe Naor

The Home Front and the Mobilization in the 1948 War

The mobilization process of the *Yishuv* (Jewish community in Palestine) for the war effort included not only military, economic and political mobilization, but also the organization of the Home Front during the war. This article focuses on the process of mobilizing the population for army service, which changed from voluntary mobilization to national mobilization.

The mobilization process started in October 1947. During the first months of the war David Ben-Gurion and the leadership of the *Yishuv* used a rhetoric that emphasized the

military attacks against the Jewish civilian population in order to encourage the Jewish population to participate in the war effort and to create social and national solidarity. In May 1948, when the war became a confrontation between the State of Israel and Arab states, and after the declaration of a state of emergency, mobilization became national rather than personal. The state was now responsible for the mobilization of the population by means of law and discipline. Therefore, the process was based on state institutions such as the army, the Defense Ministry and the Labor Ministry, rather than voluntarism. By the end of 1948, after the second truce, differences between civilians at home and soldiers at the front had increased and become more obvious. At the same time, the heavy drain of the war on the economy drew attention to the need for starting the process of demobilization.

David Tal

The Evacuation of Non-Belligerents from the Border Areas in the Israeli War of Independence

In a process that started in April 1948 and reached a peak in 15–20 May, nearly 8,000 children, elderly people and those taking care of them were evacuated from over 70 Jewish settlements along the borders of the newly created State of Israel, in many cases under fire. This step was taken after the Jewish victory over the Palestinian forces in April–May and with the Arab armies' invasion of Palestine. The Jewish leadership's initial decision to leave the non-combatant population in areas that by 15 May had become a war zone was based on the experience of the Jewish–Palestinian struggle, which had generated three basic premises: (a) the sense that there was no front line: since the struggle was conducted throughout the country, both in urban areas and in the countryside, no area was considered safer than another; (b) that the Palestinian threat was not so critical as to require the evacuation of non-belligerents; and (c) that evacuation would weaken the willpower of the settlers in their struggle. However, as soon as the first Arab shell exploded within Jewish border settlements, the feeling that there was no front and no rear immediately changed. With the Arab armies' invasion a clear front line emerged, both physical and mental, and led to the decision to evacuate non-belligerents from the border areas.

Haim Fireberg

The Lottery for the Plots of Ahuzat-Bayit: The Creation of an Urban Myth

On 11 April 1909, the members of the "Ahuzat-Bayit" Association gathered on a sand dune on the outskirts of Jaffa to raffle the plots on which they intended to build the houses of the "Ahuzat-Bayit" neighborhood, the heart of the future city of Tel Aviv. The usual description of the event is very colorful and has long become the legendary

founding story of Tel Aviv, reiterated in many scholarly publications. However, the popular story, which is loaded with symbolic meanings, is in many ways problematic. It is not borne out by chronicles that were written at the time by participants in the lottery. This gap between the enthusiastic descriptions that were written long after the event and the silence of earlier sources is very troubling. Did the lottery take place at all? And if it did, did it happen in the way that it has usually been narrated? Did the participants in the event attribute symbolic meanings to it? Where exactly did it take place and do we have any visual evidence of it? By addressing these and other questions, this article examines the process by which, over the years, the urban legend about the birth of Tel Aviv was created.

Bat-Zion Eraqi Klorman

Ritual Slaughter, Butchers and the Yemenis' Position in the Moshavot's Social and Economic Life

From about 1915 until the 1930s Yemeni slaughterers and butchers dominated the meat market in the agricultural settlement (*moshavah*) of Rishon le-Zion. Their participation in this field contributed to lowering the price of meat, which benefited both Ashkenazi and Yemeni customers. Despite their efforts, the slaughterers and butchers were only partially able to narrow the vast gap between the Yemeni community and the rest of the *moshavah*'s Ashkenazi inhabitants. Two main factors contributed to this state of affairs: (1) the Ashkenazi leadership of Rishon le-Zion, which employed the Yemeni slaughterers, denied them equal pay with the Ashkenazi slaughterers; and (2) in attempting to push the Yemenis out of their position in the meat market, the *moshavah*'s Ashkenazi religious functionaries denounced the religious reliability of the Yemeni slaughterers on the basis of different religious practices regarding slaughter. In doing so, they appealed to additional rabbinical authorities, such as Rabbi Abraham Kook, who declared the Yemeni slaughter as not kosher for Ashkenazi consumption. This article argues that the attitude of Rishon le-Zion's secular and religious leadership toward the Yemenis and then social and economic peripheralization reflected Yemeni–Ashkenazi relations in general.

Paula Kabalo

“Teenage” Citizens: The Youth Conference in Sheikh Munis — Conflict, Dialogue and Encounter

In the first years of independence, David Ben-Gurion was disturbed by the possibility that the tradition of voluntarism that had been dominant in the pre-state era would disappear. This concern was based on the increasing public tendency in Israel to see the state as the only body responsible for the implementation of the new national goals —

the absorption of new immigrants and the social, cultural and economic development of the country. In response to this trend Ben-Gurion presented his view on the role of the state in encouraging voluntary nonpartisan activity as a main channel for the creation of civic engagement and civic cohesiveness, which were considered vital to the continuity and stability of the new state. The idea of civic engagement was to be spearheaded by the educated Jewish Israeli young generation, mostly born or raised in Palestine (*Eretz Yisrael*). They were encouraged to go to remote areas of the country to create new settlements while merging with the new immigrant population, even at the cost of their individual career ambitions and plans.

The event that most symbolizes this new message was the youth conference held on June 1954 in Sheikh-Munis, Tel Aviv, which engendered a public debate over the legitimacy, scope and meaning of Ben-Gurion's call for volunteering. The conference and the debate following it, as well as the young people's lack of enthusiasm for the leaders' demands, aroused an intensive dialogue between the leaders and the adult public, on the one hand, and young Israelis on the other. Another level of dialogue was created among the youth themselves, and the debate extended to wider fields concerning the younger generation's role in society and obligations as citizens in the new state and society.

Batya Brutin

On the Altar of the Nation and the Homeland

The monuments commemorating the Holocaust mold Israel's Holocaust remembrance; they give visual expression to a set of messages, meanings, ideas and myths and contribute to shaping the collective historical memory of Israeli society. Integrating the Holocaust into the national consciousness in Israel was a gradual process which began by emphasizing the resistance during the Holocaust, mainly the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. Since the historical circumstances of the uprising accorded with the myth of "the few against the many," which was seen as the situation of Israeli society during the fight for Israel's establishment and the early days of the state, the symbolic heroism of the Ghetto fighters was depicted in several monuments. Besides the monuments glorifying the Warsaw Ghetto heroes were also monuments commemorating the partisans in the forests and the Jewish soldiers in the Allied forces as a group representing heroism during the Holocaust. Finally, monuments that integrated the victims of the Holocaust with the fallen soldiers of Israel's wars were built, representing them as having sacrificed their lives for the nation and the homeland.

Ronny Miron

History and Zionism in the Thought of Nathan Rotenstreich

The aspiration to integrate the cultural heritage of the Jewish past into contemporary public life of Israel lay at the heart of Nathan Rotenstreich's philosophical work. Beyond his recognition of the importance of the developmental element in Jewish history, Rotenstreich aspired to shift Zionism from the limited, and concrete level of pioneering and politics to the level of a spiritual movement that would give new meaning to the Jewish past and reconnect modern secular Israelis to their Jewish roots. These ideas resembled those of Ahad-Ha'am, Bialik, Buber and others, all of whom saw Zionism first and foremost as a solution to "the problem of Judaism" and only subsequently to "the problem of the Jews." The whole modern European philosophic tradition by which he was influenced, and especially the phenomenological method, helped to shape his endeavor to draw from the Jewish past formative patterns for contemporary Jewish consciousness. Perceiving the present as anchored in the cultural heritage of the past, Rotenstreich presented his own way of addressing the gap, or the dynamic tension, between the static elements of the past and the dynamics of the present.