

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.

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Summaries

Guy Miron

Between Integration and Distinctiveness: The Concept of Emancipation in German-Jewish Discourse

The article examines the ideological developments and political strategies of the central German Jewish organizations through an analysis of the ways in which they conceptualized the term “emancipation.” The time frame for this discussion is from the 1890s—the decade when the modern political organizations of German Jews were established on a national scale—to the early years of the Nazi regime. Not only did the liberal Jewish camp, on the one hand, and the national Jewish camp, on the other, have different views of Jewish integration in Germany, but there was also a variety of attitudes within each of these camps. The article shows how towards the end of this period, in the last years of the Weimar republic and the first years of the Nazi regime, the discussions on the term “emancipation” reflected a shift to a more positive view of Judaism as well as a decrease in ideological tensions within the Jewish organizations.

Na’ama Sheffi

“And Suddenly the Wheel of History Turned”: *Professor Mannheim* in Habima, 1934

Professor Mannheim, a forgotten play by the marginal German-Jewish author Friedrich Wolf, was produced in the Habima Theater in Tel Aviv shortly after the Nazis’ seizure of power. The play portrays a respectable Jewish surgeon, Professor Mannheim, who loses his high position in a hospital. Mannheim, who defines himself first as a German and only then as a Jew, rejects all insinuations that he should leave Germany, an idea that is promoted both by anti-Semites and by Zionists. The article analyzes the reception of the play by critics and young viewers in the *Yishuv*, who all shared a belief that European Jewry needed to redeem itself through active Zionism. Viewing the play from a “negation of exile” perspective, they expressed anger at Mannheim’s anti-Zionist response and, above all, at his suicide, and were disappointed by the small role allotted in the play to the character of Simon, the male nurse with Zionist inclinations.

Jeffrey Herf

Rethinking Origin, Event and the War against the Jews: Nazi Propaganda about the Jewish Enemy during World War II and the Holocaust

The following essay draws on a larger interpretation of anti-Semitic Nazi propaganda during World War II and the Holocaust to raise two issues. First, it examines what changed in the nature of European and German anti-Semitism so that for the first time in its long history this hatred accompanied and legitimated mass murder. Second, it argues that an examination of Nazi anti-Semitic propaganda requires a revision of the now conventional understanding of the meaning of the phrase, “the war against the Jews.” Addressing the shift from past eras of persecution to that of the Holocaust requires fresh thinking about the relationship between “origin” and “event.” A modified intentionalist interpretation of the radical anti-Semitic narrative of Nazi propaganda during World War II and the Holocaust illustrates the importance of this effort to complement the scholarship about origins with an understanding of the shorter-term conjuncture of politics, ideology and events, and thus explain the new chapter in the history of anti-Semitism represented by the Holocaust.

David Cesarani

The Emergence of “the Holocaust” as a Cultural Construct in Israel and the Diaspora after World War II

In the 1990s a consensus emerged amongst historians who examined the impact of the Nazi persecution and mass murder of the Jews on postwar politics, society and culture in Europe, the United States and Israel. They all appeared to agree that after a brief flurry of attention spanning the liberation of the concentration camps and the trials of Nazi leaders and war-crimes perpetrators, the world lost interest in what had happened to the Jews. It became the new received wisdom not only that there had been a postwar “silence” about the Nazi annihilation campaign waged against the Jews, but also that it was broken only when it became the interest of organized Jewish communities to do so by “constructing” what became known as “the Holocaust.” This article focuses on the case of Britain, placing it in a comparative framework alongside Europe, Israel and North America. It interrogates the notion of “silence,” reviews evidence that qualifies it or contradicts it in the case of Israel and the USA, and then examines aspects of how Britain remembered and reckoned with the genocide against the Jews between 1945 and the mid-1950s. On this basis it suggests some conceptual hypotheses for restructuring our approach to understanding how “the Holocaust” emerged as a cultural construct and a feature of public memory in the fifteen years between the end of World War II in Europe and the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem.

Yechiam Weitz

The Passenger in Lod airport: The “Schacht Affair” and Its Significance

On 26 November 1951, a flight from the Far East to Europe, which had been intended to stop over at Cairo airport, landed instead at Lod airport in Israel. One of its passengers was Hjalmer Schacht, who had been President of the Reichsbank in 1933–1939. His brief stay on Israeli soil became a scandal not only because Schacht had been a prominent figure in the Third Reich, but also because it occurred six weeks before the debate in the Knesset on reparations from West Germany (7 January 1952). This scandal, which was reflected in the press, the Knesset and even the government, can be seen as a “dress rehearsal” for the struggle over reparations from West Germany. It also revealed the stereotypical image of the Holocaust prevalent in Israel in the 1950s.

Alon Gan

Flowers to Germany? Cracks in the Glass House

This article deals with a controversy that took place in 1965–1966 in the kibbutzim of Ha-Kibbutz ha-Me’uhad, which led to a painful, tense and highly charged clash between economics and morality, emotions and rationality, symbols and commerce. One of the basic principles of Ha-Kibbutz ha-Me’uhad was its anti-German stand and its struggle against any sign of normalization in relations with Germany. The article demonstrates the growing gap between the anti-German declarations and the actual deeds and decisions relating to the kibbutz economy by analyzing the abortive attempt by the leaders of Ha-Kibbutz ha-Me’uhad to obstruct the intensifying and expanding economic ties between its kibbutzim and Germany.

Shlomo Shafir

Yitzhak Rabin Meets Helmut Schmidt:

The First Official Visit of an Israeli Prime Minister to West Germany

The article deals with the growing political differences between Israel and West Germany from the beginning of Schmidt’s chancellorship, the impact of the European Community’s resolutions on German policies after the Yom Kippur War, the pressure of the Arab oil producers, and Schmidt’s own fears that Germany and Western Europe would suffer a severe economic crisis if there were another round of hostilities between Israel and its Arab neighbors. It examines the handling of the complex post-Holocaust German-Jewish relationship by Rabin and Schmidt as representatives of a younger generation in the leadership of their nations. Despite repeated mutual declarations of friendship, no real “meeting of the minds” took place at the talks in Bonn. However, the

relaxed atmosphere and the pragmatic attitude of both prime ministers helped obtain further German economic assistance for Israel as well as vital cooperation in other fields. Foreign Minister Yigal Allon, who met quite frequently with his counterpart Hans Dietrich Genscher, contributed to these positive Israeli-German bilateral relations, the major political difficulties concerning the occupied territories and Palestinian self-determination notwithstanding.

Dan Porat

Varying Perceptions of the Holocaust: The Discourse of Holocaust and Revolt among Israeli Youth

Over the past few years, Israel's education system has made great efforts to communicate the memory of the Holocaust to Israeli youth, and much important and interesting scholarly work has been dedicated to Holocaust education. Nonetheless, these investigations have not addressed a central question: how the recipients of these representations perceive the Holocaust. Much of the literature assumes that the memory of the Holocaust in Israeli society is homogenous. In this study, in order to test this assumption, sixteen teenagers were interviewed about their historical memories of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. The students came from three different schools: a yeshiva high school in Jerusalem; a secular public school located in a development town largely populated by Mizrahim and immigrants from the Former Soviet Union and Ethiopia; and a secular public school in Jerusalem that draws its students mainly from the upper and middle classes. The study reveals the diverging views of the uprising among the three groups of students, thus questioning the assumption of a shared memory of the Holocaust in Israeli society.

Dalia Ofer

In the Footsteps of the Holocaust: The Case of Refugees from Kladovo-Sabać

This article is concerned with the processes shaping Israelis' collective memory of the fate of their families in the Holocaust. In particular, it addresses how and when a person remembers, what significance is attached to this act of remembrance, and how this memory is transmitted from generation to generation. The article considers the transmission of family memory to the second and third generations and the various public contexts within which the significance of family memory developed. It focuses on a group of youngsters who were stranded in an illegal immigration transport in Kladovo-Sabać, Yugoslavia (present-day Serbia), and brought to Palestine by Youth Aliya in spring 1941. Their parents, friends and relatives were murdered by the Nazis in the fall of 1941 and winter of 1942. In 2002 I joined survivors and relatives of the original group on a trip to Serbia to visit the locations where the refugees had stayed

and where they had been murdered. I later interviewed participants in this trip in order to inquire when, and at what stage in their lives, they had shared their personal story and that of their lost families with their own children; when, and why, they had initiated efforts to make this episode more widely known; how their children had reacted to their family history and whether they were able to make it significant for their own lives; and finally, what had motivated them to set out on a journey of remembrance to Serbia in 2002, and whether it had fulfilled their expectations.