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CONTENTS

Vol. LXVI, No. 1 (636)
JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1999

Israel	3
NEW ELECTIONS AFTER ALL	<i>Susan Hattis Rolef</i>
6	
POLITICAL STORMS	<i>Misha Lowish</i>
Biography	9
A BURNING BUSH: MOSHE SNEH	<i>David Rosenthal</i>
16	
MASTER SPY: ELI COHEN	<i>Joseph Adler</i>
Books	22
JEWES: THE ESSENCE AND CHARACTER OF A PEOPLE by Arthur Hertzberg and Aron Hirt-Manheimer	<i>Haim Chertok</i>
MESSIANISM, ZIONISM AND JEWISH RELIGIOUS RADICALISM by Aviezer Ravitsky	24 <i>Jack Fischel</i>
In Memoriam	26
AVIVA KAUFMAN PENN HINDA KATZMAN	<i>Elaine S. Mann</i> 25
In the Movement	28
GARIN 2000 — THE REAL DEAL THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE AT BET BERL	<i>Ezra Weinberg</i> 30
Contributors	31
Poetry	31
THE CONFERENCE FLYING KITES IN PELHAM A SURVIVOR'S LEGACY TO HER CHILDREN	<i>Edmund Pennant</i> 29 <i>Judith Sherman</i>

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New Elections After All

By Susan Hattis Rolef

On December 21, 1998, the Knesset passed a bill for the early dissolution of the Knesset. In first reading, 81 Members of Knesset — including Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu and Minister of Defense Itzik Mordechai — voted in favor of the bill, and 30 voted against. Despite the fact that he voted in favor of early elections, in his speech Netanyahu made a faint, last-minute offer in the Labor Party to join a national unity government — an offer he knew would be rejected out of hand, and which was made to try and gain some points with the general public (“You see, I offered national unity — it was Labor that rejected it!”). The following week the Knesset Constitution, Law and Justice Committee decided that elections would be held on May 17 — exactly 22 years after the elections to the 9th Knesset, which for the first time brought the Likud to power. On January 4, 1999, the Knesset passed the early dissolution in second and third reading. This time 85 MKs voted in favor and 27 against. Speaker Dan Tichon abstained and Netanyahu didn’t show up.

The Knesset’s decision to dissolve itself reflected a widespread feeling, both within the Opposition *and* the Coalition, that Netanyahu’s Government had reached a dead-end, and that there was no way out of this situation. That the Opposition should have reached that conclusion is not surprising, but the Opposition was joined by close to half the Members of Knesset from the Coalition. A combination of reasons convinced numerous members of the Coalition that early elections were desirable (or unavoidable) — all connected with the incoherence of the Government, on the one hand, and Netanyahu’s character and style, on the other.

First, there was the stubborn opposition among certain members of the Coalition to the Wye Plantation Agreement and Netanyahu’s ambivalence regarding the Agreement’s implementation. On the other hand there were those in the Coalition who supported the Agreement (including Minister of Defense Itzik Mordechai), who were disturbed by Netanyahu’s ambivalence, for the opposite reasons.

Second, as the month of December rapidly came to a close, the Government was unable to get its budget for 1999 through. After several weeks of arguing that without the support of all sections of the Coalition for the budget and the economic goals that it aspired to attain, the Government could not continue to function. Minister of Finance Yaacov Ne’eman, who had actively supported the idea of forming a national unity government, decided to resign.¹ Even before Ne’eman announced his intention to resign, Netanyahu tried to bolster up his coalition by offering the Ministry of Finance to the leader of Geshet, David Levy, who earlier this year left the Ministry for Foreign Affairs with a huff and a puff. But very soon, and true to character, Netanyahu managed to hurt Levy’s feelings, and Levy returned to his corner sulking.

Third, independently of any particular issue, there was growing opposition among Likud Ministers and Knesset Members to

¹ In the Summer of 1998 Ne’eman had acted as an intermediary between Netanyahu and Labor leader Ehud Barak in an attempt to work out the basis for a national unity government, but despite progress in working out the basic guidelines for such a government, the attempt failed. The final death blow to the initiative was Netanyahu’s aggressive attack against the Labor Party after his return from Wye Plantation.

Netanyahu's broken promises and fickle leadership, the sole goal of which seems to be the Prime Minister's own political survival, at any cost. Outgoing Tel-Aviv mayor, Ronnie Milo was the first senior member of the Likud to leave the party. At the end of December he was joined by two Likud "princes" — former Minister of Finance Dan Meridor, and later former Minister of Science and Technology Benny Begin, son of former Prime Minister Menachem Begin. While Milo and Meridor turned to the Center, Begin turned to the Right. At the time of writing (4 January, 1999) another two senior members of the Likud — Minister of Defense Itzik Mordechai and Minister of Communications Limor Livnat — are also considering leaving the Likud. It is believed that if the two do finally decide to leave, Mordechai will turn to the Center and Livnat will join Begin.

Among those who object to Netanyahu's leadership but nevertheless decided to stay in the Likud, Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert considered contesting the Likud leadership, but decided to give up, when he discovered that in the current Likud Central Committee he cannot possibly win. Another Likud "prince" — chairman of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Security Committee Uzi Landau — has decided to challenge Netanyahu, with the support of former Likud leader and Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, even though he doesn't stand a chance.

In Israeli politics four and a half months — the time left until the elections — are a very long time, and at this stage it is very difficult to guess what will happen in the course of this period. Several things are clear, however. The first is that even though on December 21 the Knesset also passed, in first reading, a bill for the cancellation of the direct election of the Prime Minister, which was proposed by Members of Knesset Uzi Landau (Likud) and Yossi Beilin (Labor), it will only come into force towards the elections to the 16th Knesset, and the approaching elections to the 15th Knesset will still be for both the Prime Minister and the Knesset.

As to the elections to the Knesset, it seems fairly certain that the Labor Party and the Likud, which were both greatly weakened in 1996, partially as a result of the new system (Labor went down from 44 seats in the 1992

elections to 32 in 1996 while the Likud went down from 32 to 22), will emerge further weakened. This is not just because of the desertions from the Likud and several expected desertions from Labor,² but also because the system enables and even encourages split voting, which tends to strengthen the medium sized parties at the expense of the large ones.³

As to the contest for Prime Minister, at this stage it seems as though there might be as many as five or six contestants in the first round, including Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, Labor leader Ehud Barak, former Chief of Staff Amnon Lipkin-Shahak, (possibly) Dan Meridor, Benny Begin, and Rabbi Yossef Ba-Gad (a former Member of Knesset for Moledet, and something of a clown). Even if some of these personalities finally decide not to run, it is quite unlikely that any of the candidates will manage to get more than 50% of the votes, and therefore there will be a second round of elections for the Premiership on June 1. In the second round it is assumed that the contest will be between Netanyahu on the one hand and either Barak or Lipkin-Shahak on the other.

Strangely enough, the opinion polls still show Lipkin-Shahak as the only candidate certain to beat Netanyahu thoroughly, even though he hasn't yet expressed clear positions on any issue, and formally hasn't even got a party. Lipkin-Shahak's appeal is his solid looks, his honest smiling eyes and the fact that so far he hasn't said anything wrong (or anything right, for that matter). Apparently Lipkin-Shahak will join up with Milo (who has already got a registered party), but currently it is not yet clear whether he will manage to get Meridor to join as well. Meridor is insisting that if he joins Lipkin-Shahak and Milo, it will only be at a later stage that the new Center party that they will create, will decide who its leader should be. Both Lipkin-Shahak and

² At the moment it seems fairly certain that in addition to former Labor Secretary General Nissim Zvili, who has already indicated his intention to join Amnon Lipkin-Shahak's new party (see below), several others might also leave. Among the names mentioned are those of Haim Ramon, Avrum Burg and Hagai Merom.

³ At this stage I would venture to predict (even though it has been said that since the destruction of the Second Temple prophecy has been given to fools only . . .), that businesswoman and former glamor girl Pnina Rosenblum will not only get into the 15th Knesset, but will bring in several additional members — so far unnamed — from her list.

Milo feel that this is a mistake, and that it will be very difficult to get the party going if it doesn't have a leader from the start.

At the moment Netanyahu is licking his wounds and trying to attract some new figures (especially former generals like Mattan Vilnai) to join his team. The desertion of his former aide and Director General of the Prime Minister's Office, Avigdor Lieberman, who declared on January 3 that he was forming a new new immigrants' party, that will contest against Natan Sheransky's "Yisrael Be'aliya" in addition to fighting "the treacherous Likud princes", the legal system and "the police state", has certainly not caused Netanyahu much *Nahat*. Barak, on the other hand, is also trying to attract various outside groups to join his "Yisrael Ahat" (one Israel) movement, and was reported to have reached an agreement with David Levy to this effect. But Barak too must still contend with possible desertions (see footnote 2) before he can start extending his ranks. Fortunately, former Labor leader and Prime Minister Shimon Peres has stopped trying to undermine Barak's position, and has actually declared his support for him.

Both Netanyahu and Barak are hoping that in the coming four and a half months "*Shahak Yishanek*" ("Shahak will be eroded"). Yitzhak Rabin's widow, Lea, has been making great efforts to get Lipkin-Shahak to give up the idea of running separately in the elections, and agree to be number two in the Labor list, with the promise of the Ministry of Defense in the government which Barak will hopefully form after the elections. She has emphasized the fact that both former Chiefs of Staff were greatly loved and admired by her late husband (also a former Chief of Staff), and has been hinting to Lipkin-Shahak that even Rabin didn't run straight away for Prime Minister after he entered politics in 1973. Before being hushed by criticism from both the Right and the Left, President Ezer Weizman also actively encouraged Lipkin-Shahak to join forces with Barak.

However, Lipkin-Shahak is convinced that he has a better chance than Barak of beating

Netanyahu, and that the Labor Party, with its Left-wing image, is a political hump. Unfortunately, he is surrounded by several advisors, who have an ax to grind with the Labor Party, and they are encouraging him to run separately at all costs. The main "culprit" is Shimon Sheves, Rabin's former right-hand man, who as Director General of the Prime Minister's Office in the years 1992-95 managed to cause a lot of tensions between Rabin and some of his Ministers. Another person close to Lipkin-Shahak is Yossi Ginnosar, one of the heads of the General Security Service (the Shabak) at the time of the bus number 300 Affair in 1984 (in which two Palestinian terrorists were killed by the Shabak *after* being caught alive), who had contested a place on the Labor list for the 13th Knesset and failed.

In the next few weeks the political map will become a little clearer and start to jell, and the election campaign, that will officially begin in March, will start in earnest. Even though a lot will be said about economics and social issues, the future of the peace treaty will be the main issue. Netanyahu will continue to talk about a "secure peace". Begin will argue that Netanyahu has sold out to the Palestinians, while Barak and Shahak will talk about the inevitability of the Palestinian state and talks with President Assad, which will result in Israel's giving the whole or most of the Golan Heights back to Syria in return for peace with both Syria and Lebanon. However, most of the campaign will be very personal, with a lot of mutual mud-slinging. It is going to be a "dirty" campaign, and probably a violent one as well. For those who like action, it is going to be a lot of fun. The *Feinschmeckers* are advised to put blinds on their eyes, plugs in their ears and clothes pegs on their noses. Let us just hope that on May 18th (or rather June 2) it will be the sane, reasonable and responsible Israel that will celebrate. After two and a half years of Netanyahu's mis-Government, we have almost forgotten that such an Israel ever existed. □

Political Storms

By Misha Louvish

The collapse of Binyamin Netanyahu's right-wing government and the Knesset's decision to hold premature elections to the post of Prime Minister and the membership of the House have precipitated a series of far-reaching changes on the political scene. The developments are so rapid and unpredictable that the situation may well be radically different by the time this article appears in print.

During Israel's first two decades one political fact could be safely predicted: whatever changes might take place in the composition of the Knesset, the largest party would always be the Israel Labor Party. *Mifleget Poalei Eretz Yisrael*, known by the acronym *Mapai*, and the basic question to be settled was: which smaller parties would combine with *Mapai* to form a coalition government?

In 1977 there took place what was little short of a democratic political revolution: as a result of the failure of the *Mapai* leadership to foresee and prevent the cataclysmic outbreak of the Yom Kippur War, the people's confidence in the traditional major party was shattered, and Herut leader Menahem Begin, heading a combination of his own party with the Liberals, and with the support of a new party, the Democratic Movement for Change (*Dash*), won a majority in the Knesset and formed a government, sending *Mapai* for the first time into the opposition.

Since 1977 there have been many changes on the political scene: sometimes Labor — *Avodah* (the new name adopted by *Mapai*) succeeded in returning the largest party in the Knesset and forming a government in a coalition, and sometimes it had to be content with a secondary position in a coalition headed by the

Likud (the new name of the anti-labor party). However, the days of its unquestioned supremacy were over.

The issues faced by Israel today should be understood against the background of the conditions accepted by Menahem Begin for his most important achievement. He succeeded at Camp David in concluding a peace treaty with Egypt, the first to be signed with an Arab country, at the expense of withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula, which had been occupied in the Six-Day War of 1967.

But that was not all. Since that area is not part of the historic Land of Israel, Begin could claim that he was not violating the basic Herut principle of *Eretz Yisrael Hashleimah*, the complete and undivided Land of Israel, but he also had to pay a momentous price for the peace with Egypt, a price that seems to be forgotten in the current controversy over relations with the Arabs in the areas that Israel occupied in repelling Arab aggression in 1967.

He agreed to negotiate on "the resolution of the Palestine problem in all its aspects"; he promised "full autonomy" to the inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza, and he undertook that the solution must "recognize the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and their just requirements."

For nearly 15 years there was no progress in implementing these provisions of the Camp David agreements. It could be claimed that the Palestinians, under Yasir Arafat, remained faithful to the National Covenant of the Palestine Liberation Organization, founded in 1964, which demanded nothing less than the annihilation of Israel. In 1988, however, Arafat vio-

lated the fundamental provisions of the Covenant by recognizing Israel's right to exist and offering to negotiate with it, and declared that the Covenant was obsolete.

An international conference on the Palestinian problem was held in Madrid, but there was little progress until Labor was able to form a coalition with a narrow majority under the late Yitzhak Rabin as prime minister in 1992, and succeeded in reaching agreement at Oslo, for the first time, with the PLO on a Declaration of Principles, which was intended to lead to a permanent settlement of the long-standing dispute with the Palestinians.

The prospects of further progress towards peace were brutally shattered by the assassination of Rabin and its consequences. Shimon Peres, his successor, seemed to be well on the road to success in the 1996 elections, but several major terrorist outrages undermined the confidence of the electors and Binyamin Netanyahu achieved a narrow victory in the election of the prime minister.

A basic reform had been introduced by general consent: in 1996 for the first time there were actually two elections, one for the prime minister and another, separately, for the Knesset. There had been widespread dissatisfaction with the often unsavory haggling between the parties before a prime minister could be elected by the House, and it was widely hoped that the reform would increase stability.

These hopes were sadly disappointed. The voters found that they could split their vote, supporting one of the two candidates for the premiership and expressing their sectional interests in the choice of their parliamentary representatives. The result was that the two large parties lost much of their strength with 34 seats for Labor and 32 for a combination of the Likud with Geshet ("Bridge"), led by David Levy, and Tsomet ("Crossroads"), headed by former Chief of Staff Raphael Eitan. Thus the Likud itself had only 20 seats, but no one except Netanyahu was entitled to form a government.

It was not long before the weakness of the coalition was revealed. It rested on the support of seven parties and groups, and there were disagreements within the Likud itself. Netanyahu and his party had opposed the Oslo accord, although it was really a weakened ver-

sion of what Menahem Begin had agreed to at Camp David, but Netanyahu said that he would implement the Oslo agreement because it had been signed by a legitimate Israeli government, and followed up by handing over most of Hebron to the Palestinians. However, he tried to hold up further concessions as long as possible on various pretexts in order to placate the powerful hawks among his supporters.

Netanyahu also ran into trouble over home policy. He had to make extensive concessions to his religious partners, who together held more Knesset seats than his own Likud. Finance Minister Dan Meridor (Likud) resigned because of disagreement on financial and economic policy, and he was followed by David Levy, together with his Geshet group, who accused Netanyahu of insensitivity to social problems and too tough attitudes in the peace negotiations.

Despite the rule of collective cabinet responsibility, ministers openly questioned and criticized government policies. Ultimately it was clear that the government could not function. Proposals came from several quarters for the establishment of a national unity government including Labor, but Netanyahu did not offer to consider such a solution until the last moment of a Knesset debate on the dissolution of the Knesset and the holding of premature elections.

The growing weakness of Netanyahu's coalition and the decision to hold premature elections were accompanied by unprecedented political storms. Ronni Milo, the retiring Mayor of Tel Aviv, had already announced his intention to set up a new center party as an alternative to the two veteran organizations. Meridor, who had remained in the Likud after his resignation from the government, announced his resignation from the party and his candidacy for the premiership.

Ehud Barak, who was the undisputed chairman of the Labor Party in succession to Shimon Peres (who, at the age of 75, was obviously too old for another term as prime minister), had not seemed to compete effectively with Netanyahu in the polls. Although Barak had been a brilliant IDF Chief of Staff and Israel's most highly decorated soldier, he had not captured the imagination of the electors as the successor to the traditional Labor leadership.

Then came the extraordinary phenomenon of Amnon Lipkin Shahak, who was due to complete his four-year term as Chief of Staff of the Israel Defense Forces. Even before he took off his uniform it was reported that he intended to get into politics in the framework of the new center party and stand for election as prime minister.

Although Shahk had not yet said a word in public about his political principles and policies (and has still, at the time of writing, made only a few non-committal remarks), public opinion polls showed a remarkable degree of electoral support for him in competition with Netanyahu and Barak, the Labor leader. Shahak is a strikingly handsome man who has the image of the ideal husband, father or uncle, and it appeared that many of the electors have been looking for a new leader, unsullied by the unsavory aspects of politics.

Binyamin Begin, obviously forgetting his father's great concessions to the Palestinians, has also proclaimed his resignation from the Likud and is standing on a platform of uncompromising opposition to the Oslo accords and any territorial concessions whatever to Yasir Arafat. Tsomet leader Raphael Eitan has

also announced his intention to run for prime minister.

Two popular Likud members of the government, Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordecai and Communications Minister Limor Livnat, are reported to be hesitating whether to stay where they are or resign and join the new center party. Some Labor members are also said to be wavering.

Barak seems to have brought about a remarkable coup in winning the support of Geshar leader David Levy, who has paid tribute to him as the only leader who has emphasized social problems. If agreement can be reached on an alliance with Levy and his group, similar to the old *Maarach* or Alignment between Labor and Mapam (the "United Workers' Party"), that might well be a decisive factor in the elections. If Barak succeeds in reaching an agreement with Meimad, the moderate religious movement, that would also be a significant move.

The date of the elections has been fixed by agreement for May 17 to avoid interfering with Independence Day and the Jewish festivals. There will, no doubt, be many changes before then.

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A Burning Bush

The Rise and Fall of Moshe Kleinbaum-Sneh

By David Rosenthal

In *Dziady* (The Forefathers), a masterwork of Poland's national poet, Adam Mickiewicz, the spiritual transformation of the selfish character Gustav into the patriotic martyr Conrad is denoted by the phrase "Here died Gustav, here was born Conrad." The metamorphosis is so radical that the poet uses the terms of birth and death to describe the appearance of the "new" personality.

Gustav, the hero of Part IV of *Dziady*, is focused on himself; he lives only in the sphere of his own interests and emotions. Conrad, on the contrary, identifies himself completely with Poland, its martyrology and aspirations. (The poem, written after the November 1831 uprising against the Russians, is based on the Russian persecutions of Polish student youth.) Through Conrad speak — boldly and powerfully — the accumulated tribulations of generations of Polish freedom fighters, so that he can exclaim to God: "I am a million, because I endure the sufferings of millions." To the reader, Conrad and Gustav are one and the same individual, but with different souls, strivings, and desires.

Was Moshe Kleinbaum-Sneh such a hero in the real world? Was there in Moshe Kleinbaum, in one period, the Haganah commander Amram, a follower of Yitzhak Gruenbaum, and in another period, a disciple of Josef Stalin? Did he go through agonies to find the ideological truth, or did his sophisticated inventiveness lead him to leap like an acrobat from one camp to another because he always accommodated his views to the direction of the political winds? Were his ideological transformations an expression of a split personality, or did they perhaps reflect the uneasy peregrina-

tions of a man full of spiritual unrest?

Moshe Kleinbaum took his first steps as a leader within Polish Jewry. At that time, one could have applied to him the aphorism coined by Chaim Nachman Bialik of Zalman Schneur — that he appeared like the young Samson, whose hair grew long overnight.

The "overnight" period in this case was in 1931, when Kleinbaum was 22 years old. In Warsaw a new Zionist daily, *Nowe Slowo*, was making its first appearance. The editorial staff consisted of Yitzhak Gruenbaum, Dr. Joseph Davidson, and Dr. Yitzhak Schipper. Around this tribunal was gathered a group of writers and Jewish leaders with established reputations, as well as several whose names gave promise of a new generation of journalists and activists.

Nowe Slowo was noted for its militant spirit and its radical opposition to the Polish government. The newspaper soon gained a devoted readership, thanks to the high level of its material on public issues. The Sunday edition featured Nahum Sokolow's "European Letters" with their uniquely intellectual and individual style and content; the feuilletons of Ben Levi (the pen name of Sejm Deputy Appolinary Hartglas); articles by Yitzhak Gruenbaum, by the versatile historian Yitzhak Schipper, and others.

Although each one of these men was a talented writer, and they overshadowed the lesser-known writers, the reader's attention was soon drawn to the short, single-column editorials under the byline of Moizesz Kleinbaum. These editorials were distinguished by an economy of words and a mathematical precision in formulating problems and positions. The name "Kleinbaum" began to engrave itself

on the consciousness of Polish Jews. Thanks to *Nowe Slowo*, Kleinbaum broke out of the student ranks (he was then studying medicine in Warsaw), and entered upon the broad highways of a turbulent Jewish world and world in general.

* * *

For about ten years, Moshe Kleinbaum was active in the affairs of Polish Jewry. There are those who say that at that time he was a follower of the Gruenbaum school. This view, however, is not justified, because even then his own distinct path as a leader, writer, and speaker was beginning to sparkle with the brightness of his considerable talent. His special style as a political analyst and party leader was expressed against the background of the general situation then prevalent in Poland and in the world Zionist movement.

Polish-Jewish history and the general events in the country were not two isolated or separate spheres, without any relationship to each other. Jews understood that their own situation was dependent on Polish national life. Jewish political parties could therefore not remain indifferent to the struggle between the democratic forces and the military-fascist circles. In 1931 there were already signs that Poland had completely dissociated itself from the tradition of romantic and aristocratic liberalism which its best cultural leaders had tried to implant in the people.

Mieczyslaw Niedziatkowski, one of the noblest figures in the Polish socialist movement (the Nazis murdered him in Auschwitz) characterized the situation this way: Jozef Pilsudski (autocratic ruler and former socialist) was in the early 1930s the leader of the vanishing world of old Poland, the Poland of aristocratic families, industrial firms, bureaucracy and moral corruption. With a dramatic turn to the right came further developments: Pilsudski appeared with a band of armed colonels in parliament. When the old Socialist tribune, Ignacy Daszewski, refused to open the session under this threat of bayonets, the Marshal dissolved the Sejm and ordered new elections.

This incident led to the creation of *Centrolew*, a union of six parties led by the socialist and peasant movements. Their aim: to oust the Pilsudski regime and establish a parliamentary democracy. In reaction came a whole

series of draconian, anti-democratic decrees which led to the arrest of important socialist and peasant leaders. In 1934, on the instructions of Joseph Goebbels, a concentration camp was set up in Bereza Kartuska, where scores of Jewish labor leaders were imprisoned (among whom were Chaim Brand, who miraculously survived, and after coming to the United States was director of the Workmen's Circle Division of the Israel Histadrut Campaign in New York).

The Jewish situation deteriorated from day to day. The pauperization of the masses of Jews deepened. Instead of parceling out the large estates of the nobility to the peasants, the government announced a plan to move large numbers of villagers to the cities, where they would take over Jewish properties and businesses. The government spoke openly about deporting Jews to Madagascar and about annulling all their constitutional rights — which existed mostly on paper anyway. The "Aryan paragraph" was introduced into the free professions. A wave of pogroms broke out in the areas around Lodz, Kielce, and Warsaw. The Catholic Church, headed by Cardinals Krakowski and Hlond, gave its blessings to all those medieval restrictions and to the economic boycott.

This situation required new forms of political struggle and resistance from the Jewish side. Jews could no longer limit themselves to protest statements in a city council, or to voting against government budgets in parliament. Jewish opposition to the reactionary, fascist plans had to be given a mass character.

Under the influence of Moshe Kleinbaum, Appolinary Hartglas, Dr. A. Insler, and Yitzhak Schipper, the Zionist Organization of Congress Poland aligned itself with the socialist and democratic opposition. It called for a boycott of the Sejm elections of 1935, although the General Zionists (Group B), the Aguda, the Mizrachi, *Eyt Livnot*, and the Merchants Association rejected it.

Together with all the democratic parties, the Zionist Organization called upon the Jewish population to concentrate on municipal elections, because their rules still assured a fair distribution of mandates, a regulation which the fascist government virtually abolished in the elections to the Sejm and the Senate. Mass participation in the elections to the

city councils, despite the “dirty tricks” of the government, was an expression of protest by the entire Polish and Jewish democratic movement against the policy of following and imitating Italian fascism and German Nazism. The weapons of struggle for the democratic and socialist circles remained the municipalities and the press, although the government did everything it could to limit their freedom and influence. In this section of the battlefield, Moshe Kleinbaum displayed a great deal of personal courage.

Dr. Kleinbaum waged his war on the pages of the dailies *Heint* and *Nowe Slowo*, and the weeklies *Opinia* and later *Ster*. On the staffs of *Opinia* and *Ster* was Leopold Halpern, a young scholar who specialized in problems of national minorities. Other stars included Jacob Bleiberg, Sh. Shwerdshart, Stefan Pomer, and Moshe Szymel. A number of young students, among them H. Justus (who used to send his dispatches from Jerusalem University), saw their first efforts printed in these newspapers. In their pages also, Roman Brandstetter, in his emotional tone and in a language full of innovative expressions and neologisms, waged war against the Polish anti-Semites and reactionaries.

None of them, however, had as strong an influence on the formation of Zionist public opinion as did Moshe Kleinbaum. He did not walk softly; he did not win his audiences with rhetorical tricks, nor did he flatter the strong — neither the rich Jews nor the Polish powers. In his articles he could be satirically sharp and ironic as well as easygoing and penetratingly clear.

The struggle created all sorts of alliances among the Jewish parties. In the 1930 elections to the Sejm, the right-wing Poale Zion worked with the Bund; in the period prior to the outbreak of World War II — when the contest between the democratic forces and the government centered on elections to the city councils — this constellation changed. The Bund, the left Poale Zion, and the Communists formed a united front in Warsaw in December 1938. (The Communists could not run openly as a legal party, but their members and sympathizers gave their votes to the slate.)

The candidates of the Democratic Bloc were Anselm Reiss, Hoch Stein, Dr. M. Peker, Apolinary Hartglas, Abraham Trepman, Ben-

jamin Tiomkewicz, and several others. Each of them had his own loyal followers; each one had the respect and trust of his own circle. But Moshe Kleinbaum mobilized the uncompromising, militant opposition to the government. The extent of his influence can be seen in the fact that a number of Polish liberal writers and university professors (Michalowicz, Kridel, Kotarbinski) issued a weekly under the name of *Czarno Na Bialym* (Black on White), one issue or which was given over to the Jewish problem in Poland. The editors asked two Jewish leaders to present their views — Victor Alter, the highly regarded theoretician and leader of the Bund, and Moshe Kleinbaum.

During his years of activity in Poland, Kleinbaum sought allies in all circles: in the peasant movement, among the socialists, and even among extreme left-wing elements. At his 60th birthday celebration, held in Beth Sokolov in Tel Aviv, he related that several years before the Eighth Congress of the Comintern — which proclaimed the slogan of the “popular front” — he had succeeded, together with other Jewish labor leaders, in creating just such a united movement in the Jewish community. The objective was to “organize the Jewish masses against fascism in Poland and against the danger of Nazi aggression.” The Polish government, however, squelched these efforts by declaring the movement illegal.

The period of Moshe Kleinbaum’s activities in the Zionist Organization of Poland coincides with the time when the halutzic idea and Histadrut were under heavy attack. The deepening impoverishment of the Jewish population, the difficulties of making aliya, the disappointment in the policies of the Mandate power — all this created a favorable soil for the slogan, “To the Right,” for the demand to reassess Zionist values and the means of Zionist fulfillment. Thus, in a number of European countries, this reevaluation meant an Eretz Israel without “socialist fantasies” in which the middle class would be dominant in the political and cultural life of the country.

Actually the attack against Labor began earlier — at the 1921 Zionist Congress in Carlsbad, where Louis Brandeis presented his plan to revamp the entire Zionist system. The halutz movement — whose hallmarks were self-sacrifice and concern for the community at large — was to adopt the capitalistic philoso-

phy of profit and special rewards for owners and investors of capital. This view was strengthened by the Fourth Aliya, which was an aliya of the Jewish middle class of Poland. These immigrants brought with them an ideology which held that the national colonization based on the contribution of the halutzim and on national capital was too costly and that its achievements were less productive and less valuable than those of private colonization.

Characteristic of this period were the comments of Chaim Weizmann, which reflected, albeit indirectly, the reasons for the split in the Zionist Organization of Poland into *Eyt Livnot* and *Al Hamishmar*. Alluding to the Fourth Aliya, Weizmann said: "When one leaves the Emek and comes into the streets of Tel Aviv the whole picture changes. The steady stream of olim gladdens me. I am happy that the ships are bringing thousands of people who are ready to risk their life savings in the Jewish national home. I do not underestimate the importance of this aliya for our work of upbuilding. Our brothers from the Nalewkis and from Dzika Street are flesh of our flesh, blood of our blood. But we must find a way to direct this stream and not allow it to divert us from our ultimate objective. It is essential to remember that we are not building our national home on the model of Dzika or the Nalewkis. We considered life in the ghetto to be a hindrance on our path; in Eretz Israel we reached our home and we are building there for eternity."

It was to the credit of *Al Hamishmar* that at its head stood, first, Yitzhak Gruenbaum, and later, Moshe Kleinbaum; it is thanks to their efforts that middle class circles, too, recognized the pioneer role of labor in the upbuilding of Eretz Israel, that they were able to assess the value of "the wisdom of Zion," the value and place of the working people and what they had created in the kvutzot and the moshavim, that they rejected the shopkeeper image of Zionism and stressed its democratic folk character, that they too opposed all attempts to break the hegemony of labor in the world Zionist movement and in Eretz Israel.

Moshe Kleinbaum's image has remained sharply engraved in my memory. Although his success happened with lightning speed, although he soared higher than his comrades in his general grasp of things,

although the esteem in which he was held was very high — despite that, there was no snobbish haughtiness in him. Max Weber defines politics as a struggle for power, but Moshe Kleinbaum's life belies that notion.

In 1938 the democratic bloc of the Right Poale Zion and the General Zionists elected only one representative to the Warsaw City Council, so the mandate went to Appolinary Hartglas. That same year, at the St. James Conference¹ which the British government convened for Jews and Arabs, and in which Jewish leaders from Eretz Israel and the diaspora participated with Chaim Weizmann and David Ben Gurion at the head, the only representative of Polish Jewry was again Appolinary Hartglas. Yet the elections took place at a time when Moshe Kleinbaum's popularity was at its height.

Several other facts cast light on Kleinbaum's uniqueness during his Polish period. Colonel Bogoslav Miedzynski, editor-in-chief of the government *Gazeta Polska* and vice Marshal of the Sejm in 1935-38, had made one of his venomous speeches in the parliament. Beginning with the assertion that 50,000 was the largest number of Jews that Poland could tolerate, he then moved on to a description of the Polish cities and towns which Jews were "polluting" and which exuded an odor of "garlic and onions."

Moshe Kleinbaum responded with an article entitled "The Pan Colonel Has a Subtle Nose." With biting irony, he demolished the Colonel's abilities as a writer and parliamentarian and showed that his only qualification for editorship was the fact that he had absorbed Streicher's teaching and was preaching its benighted "principles." He ridiculed the colonel's ignorance in handling the problem of the city and the village and concluded that for a subtle nose you also need an eye without the film of hatred, as well as the intelligence to understand social developments. To talk this way to a Polish colonel was no small *chutzpa*.

In 1936, when the Arab riots broke out in Palestine, the national organizations of the yishuv and of the Zionist movement proclaimed the doctrine of *Havlaga* (restraint).

¹ At this conference, Foreign Minister Lord Halifax and Colonial Secretary Malcolm MacDonald tried to force the Jews to renounce not only the idea of a Jewish national home in Palestine but even of a Jewish majority there.

There were other circles, however, who rejected that position. At that time Dr. Kleinbaum published an article in *Haynt* with the title "The Sun Comes Up in Flames." He condemned the tactic which made no distinction between Arabs who were terrorists and those who were innocent — men, women, and children against whom some Jews were perpetrating acts of revenge. This doctrine was fanning the flames, not extinguishing them, he said. It was driving impartial Arabs into the terrorist groups instead of isolating the terrorists from them. Thanks to the Haganah, Kleinbaum argued, it has been demonstrated that it is now impossible to destroy the Jewish work of construction or to paralyze Jewish life or to starve out the yishuv. In the very midst of Arab terror, new kibbutzim were being established — Tirat Z'vi, Hanita, and others — which were beacons of Jewish national freedom.

And then, in August 1939, came the 21st Zionist Congress in Geneva. The *Congress Tzeitung* (of which a daily edition was published in several languages with stenographic reports of all the sessions and the proceedings of the committees) brought the latest news about the sessions. Over this Congress hovered the shadow of the approaching world war. Dr. Kleinbaum introduced a proposal that, in view of the tense situation, the Congress should speed up its proceedings, so that the Polish delegation might have a chance to return home before it was too late. The Executive was elected in haste. And Chaim Weizmann closed the Congress with these words:

"I have only one prayer at this moment — may we all see each other again . . ."

* * *

Moshe Kleinbaum's Eretz Israel period (with the exception of the years 1940-1947, when he headed the Haganah and was a member of the Jewish Agency Executive) is rich in surprises and contradictions which muddled his manner of thinking. In the eyes of his former followers and admirers, he brought about his own downfall. During this period he presented a tragic figure, in the way that any great personality is tragic who has a compulsion to reverse his long-held views. Moshe Kleinbaum from Poland was miles apart from Moshe Sneh of MAKI, the Jewish Communist Party in Palestine. Between these two ideological positions there was such a wide gap, meta-

morphosis so absolute, that one can dare to paraphrase the poet's words here and say of him: "Here died Moshe Kleinbaum; here was born Moshe Sneh."

His association with MAPAM (1947-53) is at least understandable. It was, after all, a movement with halutzic traditions, with important achievements in the upbuilding of Eretz Israel, despite the fact that it aroused so much opposition. Especially shocking was its position on the Prague trials and the blood libels against Jewish doctors in the Soviet Union. MAPAM was a manifestation not only of hyper-individualistic confusion, but also of such blind servitude to Stalin that it almost turned MAPAM itself into part of the Soviet moral wasteland.

Kleinbaum's transition to MAPAM was not entirely unexpected. Even during his membership in the General Zionist movement, he maintained that Russia would become an important political factor in the Middle East and that the Jews should therefore seek closer ties with her. Even at that time he was anti-British. When Ben Gurion, before the State was established, used to refer to the strength of the Arab armies, Sneh would accuse him or going so in order to divert attention from the imperialist danger of Great Britain.

It is well known that even when Sneh was with MAPAM he was not completely trusted by many leading Israelis. In 1950, when MAPAM was outside the government, its leaders tried to explain this hostility by the fact that MAPAM's proposals relative to Tzva Haganah l'Yisrael were not accepted, and that its people had been kept out of the highest command posts in the army. In the negotiations to broaden the government, Ben Gurion demonstrated the baselessness of that charge: he assured them that "all former military commanders who were members of MAPAM — Israel Galili Yigal Allon, Moshe Carmel — (with one exception), could immediately return to their posts, because they had not been dismissed anyway, but resigned on their own initiative.

Sneh's affiliation with MAKI cast a dark shadow on his character and personality. MAKI was an outgrowth of the Palestinian Communist Party or of the "fraction" whose anti-Zionism had a long history of almost pathological hatred of the Jewish yishuv 'in

Eretz Israel. The Communist Party of Palestine had ties to the Arab effendis and muftis. It incited the Arab population against the Jews, called openly for pogroms and protest marches against the "Zionist immigration of plunder and of carnivals staged at the expense of the Arabs." From the establishment of the State of Israel until 1967, MAKI followed the Moscow line on every issue, including Israel.

Moshe Sneh must have known very well that he would be tainted by joining a Communist Party that took its directives from the Soviet Union. He was certainly familiar with the split in the Poale Zion movement during which pro-Communist members hoped that they would be able to safeguard some of their Zionist beliefs while they were inside the Third International. The bitter finale or that Illusion was no secret to him. He must have remembered that the Polish Communist Party was dissolved in 1935 by the Comintern for its sin of defending Poland's national independence against Nazi encroachment. And from his visits to Poland after World War II, he had an opportunity to convince himself personally concerning the fate of all the leaders and members of the Polish Socialist Party who had come up out of the underground and, together with the Communists, had founded the United workers Party.

Yes, he had plenty of opportunity to learn that the Communist line is at all times and under all circumstances always the same—complete subordination to Soviet interests. Yet this did not stop him, for so many years, from allowing himself to be trapped by that political line.

It must be said, however, that Sneh had broken with the official Soviet line even before the Six Day War. In February 1963 he made a speech to the Knesset which created a sensation. Jonah Yigal (Goldberg, one of the leaders of Gordonia in Poland) said about that particular speech:

"In the Knesset discussion about preserving national resources and Israel's landscapes, Moshe Sneh delivered a flaming, patriotic speech which, in form and content, reminded Prime Minister David Ben Gurion of the speeches of Moshe Sneh, the General Zionist. His speech was reminiscent of the Song of Songs . . . He referred to sources in the bible. The entire speech was overflowing with love for Israel, its natural beauties, its hills, its his-

torical places. The Knesset members listened with close attention and amazement and began searching for the real causes of this public address by a communist leader who was a trained and experienced politician and quite expert at partisan and political tactics . . . It is difficult to know what will really be the final path of Sneh, a Zionist from birth, who sold his soul to the Devil and joined the camp of the sworn enemies of the Jewish homeland and its culture."

Perhaps this speech was a harbinger of a change that was ripening within him, a change which later led to the split in MAKI and to the publication of his famous theses at its 16th convention. Or perhaps the tradition and education of his father's house in Radzyn came back to move him. Prof. Isaiah Berlin, in his essay on Moses Hess, describes the religious education and milieu which his grandfather had provided for him. Then he writes: "One can imagine the consequences for the world if Karl Marx, grandson of a rabbi, had been raised in the religious way of life of a Moses Hess instead of on a diet of 18th century rationalism by a father who was a devotee of Voltaire. Perhaps Moses Sneh is an example of the consequences of a thoroughgoing Jewish education."

There were other reasons for Moshe Sneh's return to his Jewish sources and for his rejoining the Jewish future. One of them was the destruction of East European Jewry. In powerful and moving words he says, in his "Problems of Communism, Democracy, and the Jewish People":

"Every Jew knows and feels that he was sentenced to death only for the sin of being a Jew, and it is only accidental that the death sentence on him was not carried out. Every Jew bears with pride in his heart the yellow patch and the Magen David that our brothers were forced to wear on their backs as a mark of degradation while they were alive and as a sign that they were to be transported to the death camps . . . After all this, there are still those who come to this people and give them advice: 'Please forget that you were Jews. Assimilate, please, free yourselves of your Jewishness, so that you may be free individuals . . . Could there be a more cynical or more brutal approach?' In 'Crowns for the Head of Jewish Literary Criticism,' Israel Stern observed: 'With daring, restless thinkers, there

sometimes occurs the miracle that, along with their mastery, God also grants them the strength and the patience to be able to limit themselves, to restrain their steps so that they don't plunge into labyrinths." Dr. Moshe Kleinbaum-Sneh, whose fate was not medicine but politics, was not one of those fortunate ones. Therein lies, perhaps, one of the reasons for his tragic life, for his endless searching, for his achievements as well as his failures. □

Dr. Moshe Kleinbaum-Sneh

physician, statesman, editor
(b. Radzyn, Poland, 1909;
d. Jerusalem, 1972).

Moshe Sneh received a doctorate in medicine from the University of Warsaw (1935).

Dr. Kleinbaum was one of the leaders of the General Zionist Organization (Yitzhak Gruenbaum's school).

He was the political editor of *Hajnt*, the Zionist Warsaw Yiddish-language daily; and of the weeklies *Opinia* and later *Ster*.

Arriving in Palestine in 1940, Dr. Sneh joined the Hagana, becoming its chief, a post which he held until 1946.

In 1945 he became a member of the Executive of the Jewish Agency Executive. He joined the Mapam Party, on whose Executive Committee he served until 1953.

In 1953 he left Mapam and formed *Miflegat ha-smol ha-sotzialisti* that merged with the Communist party.

He was a member of the Knesset from 1949 to 1965. □



Photo taken during plenary session of the World Jewish Congress June 1948 in Montreux, Switzerland, during session celebrating establishment of State of Israel. Delegates are singing *Hatikva*. Moshe Sneh is at left.

LABOR ZIONIST ALLIANCE
mourns the passing of

HINDA KATZMAN

a lifelong Labor Zionist who served many decades faithfully on the staff of the Farband and the National Committee for Labor Israel. She was the widow of the late Jacob Katzman with whom she shared a profound interest in Jewish life and the cause of Israel.

SIGN 'EM UP!!!

There are thousands of Jews in every community who share the Labor Zionist vision and should share in implementing our program here and in Israel.

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The Time is NOW.

The Saga of Eli Cohen

By Joseph Adler

Since the earliest of recorded time spies and espionage have had great political significance. The Old Testament, for example, relates how the Lord directed Moses to select twelve of the "rulers" of the tribes of Israel and ordered him to send them to spy upon the Land of Canaan. The Bible also tells how Moses's successor Joshua sent men into Jericho to spy out the town's defenses and how their information proved of invaluable assistance to the Jewish leader. These efforts by the early Hebrews to employ espionage to obtain information about the plans and activities of their opponents has its parallels in the history of the modern State of Israel. Among the many extraordinary espionage feats carried out by the secret agents of the latter state none can compare in sheer audacity and courage to the exploits of one Eliyahu ben Shaul Cohen (better known as Eli Cohen).

Eli was born in Alexandria, Egypt on December 16, 1924. His parents Shaul and Sofie Cohen, natives of Aleppo, Syria had been settled in Egypt since 1914, and had raised a family of six boys and two girls. Eli was the oldest son, and like his brothers and sisters was brought up as an Orthodox Jew. A gifted student, Eli attended a religious primary school, and later was enrolled in the Midrash Rambam, a center of Talmudic study headed by the Chief Rabbi of Alexandria (Moshe Ventura). During his teens his interests switched from religious studies to science and mathematics, and after winning a coveted scholarship to the French Lycee he gave up his original plans to be a rabbi.

From early childhood Eli Cohen was an active participant in Hehalutz, the Zionist pioneering movement. When in 1944 the Haganah,

the clandestine Jewish organization for armed self-defense in Palestine during the British Mandate, decided to expand its network in Egypt, Eli eagerly joined the ranks of the new group. Nevertheless, he still found time to continue his education and in 1946 Eli enrolled in Cairo's King Farouk University as a student in electrical engineering.

The increase in anti-Semitism in Egypt in the years immediately following the conclusion of World War II and the birth of Israel impacted heavily on the country's Jews. Eli along with all other Jewish students was forced to leave the university, and his family emigrated to Israel. Eli, however, chose to remain in Egypt, and would not see his family again for another six years.

Anxiety about the safety of his family removed, Eli plunged wholeheartedly into the Zionist underground effort to assist Egyptian Jews to leave the country (it was dubbed "Operation Goshen"). His talents were quickly recognized and he was recruited by an agent of Mossad, Israel's secret intelligence service, to become a member of a select group of young Egyptian Jews engaged in intelligence gathering and sabotage.

Following the overthrow of the Farouk regime (July, 1952) and the ascendancy to power of the Free Officers' Group led by General Muhammed Naguib, and later Gamal 'Abd-ul Nasser the situation in Egypt took a radical turn. The British and American governments anxious to appease the new ruler of the Nile tended to favor a Middle East policy that was even more strongly pro-Arab than previously. Disturbed by this turn of events

orders were given from Tel Aviv to the Jewish select group in Egypt to carry out a sabotage operation in Cairo and Alexandria. The targets included American and British property and was intended to create tension in the fatuous hope that the attacks would be attributed to the Egyptian regime and result in the Western Powers moderating their friendly relations with Cairo. The capture of one of the saboteurs resulted in the roundup and arrest of the group. Two of the ring's members were executed, one committed suicide, and the others were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. The incident which became known as the Lavon Affair (after Israel's Minister of Defense who was forced to resign as a result of the failed operation) became a cause celebre which dominated Israeli politics for many years.

Fortunately for Eli Cohen, no arrested member of the Jewish spy ring mentioned his name. Nevertheless, he was interrogated and imprisoned for four months, but eventually released. Following the Suez War and Sinai Campaign of 1956, Eli Cohen was again arrested and detained aboard the prison ship *Marianis Rosso* until January, 1957. Upon his release he was expelled from Egypt and joined his family in Israel.

Cohen found it difficult to adjust to his new home, but as a result of his past experiences and knowledge of languages (Arabic, Hebrew, French and English) he was able to find a job analyzing and translating for the Ministry of Defense articles from Arab newspapers and periodicals. The job petered out after a few months, and Eli found employment with a chain of supermarkets. It was at this juncture in his life (1959) that he met and married Nadia, a pretty immigrant from Iraq, a nurse by occupation.

Soon after his marriage Cohen was approached by a senior officer of Mossad and offered a job with the agency. At first he turned down the offer, but when he found himself once again unemployed and his wife pregnant he accepted the position when approached a second time. Six months of intensive training followed in which he was taught the rudiments of photography and radio transmission, weaponry and aircraft recognition and sundry other specialized subject matter essential to the field of espionage. In addition he was taken to a Moslem sheikh for instruction in the Koran.

Most importantly, Eli Cohen was given a new identity and meticulous cover. Henceforth he was to be Kamal Amin Taabes, an Arab of Syrian descent. According to the family background provided by the Mossad, Kamal's father Amin and mother Saida Ibrahim had left Syria years before to seek their fortune in Beirut. Kamal had been born there as well as a sister named Aina (but she had died in infancy). The family had then moved to Egypt, settling finally in Alexandria where Kamal spent his childhood. The father, however insisted that the family retain Syrian nationality. In 1947, Kamal's uncle invited his father to join him in Buenos Aires, Argentina, as a partner in a textile firm. The family moved to Argentina, but the firm they established went bankrupt. After the death of his parents Kamal lived with his uncle, and worked in a travel agency. Eventually he went into business for himself and achieved financial success as the owner of a company importing and exporting goods between South America and Europe.

His training and cover complete, Eli was dispatched to Zurich where a Mossad agent provided him with the passport and other essential paperwork identifying him as Kamal Amin Taabes. He then traveled to Beirut and from there embarked for Buenos Aires. In Argentina's capital Eli rented an apartment, and studied the list of influential Arabs living in the city given him by Mossad. One half million Arabs lived in Argentina, and Buenos Aires was full of clubs and restaurants where Syrian, Lebanese, and other Arabs gathered. Once settled in, Eli began to frequent Arab restaurants, cinemas, cultural and political clubs. His charm, self-confidence, intelligence, and especially his open purse soon attracted several eminent leaders of the Arab colony of Buenos Aires.

One evening at the Islamic Club of Buenos Aires, Eli met a distinguished individual named Abdullah Latif Hashan, the editor of the largest Arab newspaper in Argentina. Hashan was captivated by "Kamal's" personality and introduced him to other prominent figures in the Arab community. Through Hashan, Eli became a regular guest at Syrian embassy receptions and cocktail parties. At one such gathering he was introduced to Major Amin Al-Hafez, the embassy's military attache. Eli's feigned enthusiasm on behalf of Syrian nation-

alism greatly impressed Al-Hafez who invited Eli to return with him to Damascus.

In the spring of 1961 Eli visited each of his Arab acquaintances to inform them he was leaving for a business trip to Europe, and that afterwards he intended to travel to Damascus where he planned to contribute to the immense national task unfolding in Syria. His announcement was warmly received and he was showered with letters of recommendation, and names and addresses of relatives, friends, government officials, businessmen, and prominent personages.

Some months later (August, 1961), Eli flew to Munich, and then to Zurich where he met with a Mossad agent, and after exchanging clothes and passports assumed his true identity. Eli then traveled to Israel for a visit with his family. After several months at home, Eli informed his family that business required that he return to Europe (December, 1961). Accordingly, he flew to Munich where he was met by the Mossad operative who returned his documents and other items which identified him as Kamal Amin Taabes. In addition, he was provided with a powerful radio transmitter hidden in the false bottom of an electric food mixer. The cord of his electric shaver served as an antenna. Eli was also given codes in invisible ink; cyanide tablets disguised as aspirin; and chemicals for making high explosives stored in toothpaste, and jars of shaving cream.

From Munich, Eli made his way to Genoa where he boarded a vessel bound for Beirut. On board he was met by Sheikh Magd Al-Ard, an international adventurer and well known merchant of Damascus. From Lebanon Al-Ard using his car drove Eli and his equipment to Damascus past customs and border guards without being stopped or searched.

In Damascus, Cohen rented a sumptuous apartment in the prestigious Abu-Rammanah quarter directly across the street from the Syrian Army Headquarters. The quarter was also the site of numerous foreign embassies including a U.N. peace-keeping mission, and contained the luxurious residences of some of Damascus's wealthiest businessmen and government officials.

Eli, alias Kamal Amin Taabes speedily settled into his new surroundings. His letters of credit and introduction gained him entrance to the banking and business circles that had inspired

the coup d'etat of September 28, 1961 which brought the Baath Party into power. Through these contacts Eli met dignitaries of the new regime as well as key military men. His new Syrian friends now included among others Lt. Maazi Zaher El-Din, the nephew of the Syrian Army's Chief of Staff; Colonel Salim Hatoum, the commander of Syria's crack parachute regiment; and George Seif the government's chief propaganda broadcaster on Radio Damascus. Eli's popularity and prestige increased steadily, helped along by hosting frequent parties, always well supplied with liquor, expensive food, hashish. He also did not neglect his public image. Thus, in one munificent gesture he established a soup kitchen for the capital city's poorest inhabitants. Indeed, some wealthy Syrian businessmen were so captivated by Eli's personality that they competed with each other to persuade the eligible young man of affairs to select and marry one of their daughters.

While strengthening his Syrian ties, Eli somehow managed to find time to improve his business cover. His import-export establishment flourished, and provided some of the funds and means to successfully carry out his mission. The firm specialized in forwarding antique furniture, backgammon tables, jewelry and objets d'art to South America and Europe.

From his apartment in Damascus, Eli Cohen began to transmit to Israel, on a regular basis, the information he daily picked up from his various acquaintances in the Syrian government and the military. The constant radio chatter from the embassies and Syrian Army Headquarters in his neighborhood provided excellent protection for his own radio transmissions.

Six months after his arrival in Damascus, Eli journeyed back to Argentina ostensibly to renew old friendships among the Arab community which now considered him to be a fierce Syrian nationalist. From Buenos Aires after exchanging identities once again he returned to his home in Bat Yam, Israel, for a well deserved rest. During his stay in Israel he agreed with his Mossad superiors on an advanced system for communicating ultra-secret photographs and documents. Henceforth, the microfilm of this material would be hidden in holes hollowed out of luxurious backgammon boards that Eli would send to "friends" in Argentina as presents, and from Buenos Aires it would travel to Tel Aviv by diplomatic pouch.

Back in Damascus, Eli reported on the new crisis looming in the country. Indeed, on March 8, 1963 a coup d'etat brought the army and their Baath Party supporters into power. Al-Hafez (now a general), Eli's friend from his days in Buenos Aires became Minister of Interior. In July of that same year a second coup made Al-Hafez President of the Revolutionary Council and absolute master of Syria. Cohen's circle of Arab friends now found themselves in many of the key posts of the new government and in the military hierarchy.

Eli attended the banquet at the President's official residence celebrating Al-Hafez's succession to power, and used the occasion to further cement his relationship with the Syrian leader. He had given Madame Al-Hafez a magnificent fur coat supposedly as a sign of the deep gratitude he felt for his old friend the general and his wife. Eli was also careful not to neglect some of the other important functionaries who were present at the banquet.

Cohen in fact had arrived at the peak of his success as an Israeli agent. No door was closed to him. He had no difficulty entering a minister's cabinet office; he had solid friendships inside the office of Syria's Army Chief of Staff, and even took part as an eminent member in Baath Party meetings. Indeed, his name was put forward by members of the National Revolutionary Council for the post of Minister of Information and Propaganda in the upcoming cabinet realignment. A grateful Al-Hafez went even further and suggested to the Revolutionary Council that Eli be groomed for the position of Minister of Defense by appointing him deputy to the current minister.

Aware of the dangers inherent in such an appointment, Eli suggested that he was not ready for such a great honor and proposed instead a propaganda tour of Argentina. His proposal was accepted and the tour proved a great success in winning sympathy for the Syrian regime. As a token of his gratitude to the leadership in Damascus, Eli wrote out a personal check of one thousand dollars for President Al-Hafez, and contributed nine thousand dollars to the coffers of the Baath Party.

Following his return to Damascus, Eli was entrusted by Al-Hafez with a secret mission of the highest importance. He was sent with a message of reconciliation to the former head of Syria, Salah al-Din Bitar who after his evic-

tion from power by Al-Hafez had fled to Jordan. Later, Eli was invited by Syrian overseas radio to broadcast appeals to fellow Syrians living in South America to come home and help the Baath Party rebuild their homeland. He used these broadcasts to insert coded messages to the Mossad.

The information sent by Eli Cohen to Israel became increasingly precise and invaluable. He related items of military importance such as names and postings of army officers; sets of orders and military regulations; maps, especially of Syrian fortifications; weaponry employed by the Syrian Army; types and quantities of ammunition; political and military plans; secrets and decisions of the regime; and the details of the closed sessions of the summit meetings held between the heads of the Arab states of the Middle East.

Eli often stated to his Arab friends that he was skeptical about the readiness of Syria's armed forces. As a result of these comments he was invited on several occasions to visit and inspect Syrian fortifications along the border with Israel. As a prospective Minister of Defense he was given during these tours details of the Syrian combat positions and was shown attack and defense plans. After observing the build-up on the Golan Heights, Eli made sketches of the bunkers and artillery emplacements he had observed and transmitted the information to the Mossad along with their precise coordinates. He was also able to pass along plans of the entire fortification system defending the key Golan Heights town of Kuneitra and a Soviet designed scheme for how the Syrians could cut off the northern part of Israel in a surprise attack. In addition, Cohen provided his superiors data about the Mig 21 fighter planes being supplied by the Soviets to Syria.

Throughout 1964, Eli's information proved vital to Israel's security. Thus, when in November of that year Syrian artillery opened fire on Israeli tractors from the Golan Heights, Israel's reaction was swift, overwhelming, and deadly accurate. Later that same year an Arab summit conference devised a plan to divert the headwaters of the Jordan River into Arab territory thereby endangering Israel's main water supply and frustrating the Jewish state's plans for the construction of a National Water Carrier. Eli was given instructions to

obtain information about the diversion scheme. Feigning interest in buying land in the area, and learning that his acquaintance Colonel Salim Hatoum had been appointed commander of the military units responsible for protecting the diversion scheme, Cohen was shown all the plans and blueprints relating to the project. He passed this information on to Israel and in 1965 the latter's airforce carried out a pre-emptive strike against Syria's preliminary works at the headwaters completely eliminating the diversion project. Israel's National Water Carrier was then completed from Lake Kinneret to the Negev without further interference.

For several months during the summer of 1964 the Syrian security services had become aware that something was radically wrong. The alarm had been sounded by an officer of the Palestinian section of Syrian army intelligence who noted that several decisions taken at government level during the evening or night had been broadcast by the Israelis the very next day. He was also struck by the precision of Israeli strikes against Syrian targets. The officer believed that spies were at work. Suspicions mounted when radio operators at India's embassy complained about radio disturbances which distorted their communications to Delhi. Soviet advisors to the Syrian intelligence service suggested that somebody was sending unauthorized radio messages, and several attempts were made without any success to discover the clandestine transmitter.

Then in the winter of 1965, the Syrians enjoyed an incredible stroke of luck. They received from the Soviets superior and more efficient transmission sets to replace the army's antiquated equipment. To check their effectiveness it was decided that all other transmission sets then in use should observe a blackout for twenty-four hours. It was during this latter period that the Syrians detected a mysterious transmission. Locating the source was easy as Eli's transmitter was the only one operating in the blackout (he was using battery power).

Eight armed men led by one Colonel Ahmed Souweidani, Chief of Counter-Intelligence broke into Cohen's apartment and found him beside his transmitter. Panic ensued as the agents did not know if they had uncovered a network or a lone operator. Moreover, it was

widely known to the arresting officer that Kamal Amin Taabes was a close friend of several prominent individuals in the regime, and in the army. Nevertheless, acting quickly sixty-nine people were immediately arrested, and inquiries were made about four hundred other persons who had been in contact with Kamal.

From an espionage case the affair soon became a political scandal as opponents of President Al-Hafez saw an opportunity to topple his regime. To protect himself and his friends Al-Hafez sent Colonel Hatoum and Colonel Sala Dalli to Eli's apartment to take over the interrogation. To the chagrin of Colonel Souweidani they transferred the prisoner to the military headquarters of an armored brigade located just outside of Damascus. Here Al-Hafez himself questioned Kamal. The latter admitted that he was not an Arab, and that his real name was Eli Cohen. He also acknowledged that he was an Israeli operative employed by Mossad.

In the four weeks that followed, Eli was systematically beaten and brutally tortured. Electrodes were placed on his genitals, and in his nostrils, and on other sensitive parts of his body, and he was given repeated electric shocks. In addition, his nails were pulled out one by one, and he underwent other refined tortures. At no stage during his ordeal did the Syrians succeed in breaking Eli Cohen's spirit. When the torture in the military camp finally ended, he was transferred to a civilian prison where even the guards and wardens developed a grudging respect for his courage.

A vast political and diplomatic campaign was launched to spare Cohen's life. A French lawyer Maitre Jacques Mercier, who had defended many Algerian nationalists offered to act as Eli's counsel, but when he arrived in Damascus he was refused entry to the prisoner, and his demand for a public trial was rejected. Instead, the Syrian regime announced that Cohen would be tried by a special military tribunal headed by Colonel Dalli and Colonel Hatoum. The latter officers were keenly aware that their own reputations and that of the President, Al-Hafez were at stake. Proceedings were held behind closed doors and Cohen was not allowed a defense counsel. The heads of the tribunal were both prosecutors and judges. Selected portions of the trial were shown on television. The trial was short, and a verdict

quickly rendered. Eli Cohen was condemned to death by hanging.

Pleas for mercy poured in from all over the world. Cardinal Felcius of Buenos Aires on his death bed sent a personal letter to President Al-Hafez asking him to regard his plea for the life of Cohen as being the last wish of a dying man. Other appeals for a commutation of the death sentence came from such prominent personages as Pope Paul VI; Bertrand Russell; the former Premiers of France, Edgar Faure and Anthony Pinay; Charles de Gaulle; the Premier of Belgium, Camille Huysman and the country's Queen Mother, Elizabeth; the Prime Minister of Canada, John Diefenbacher; twenty-two members of the British Parliament; the International Red Cross, and scores of other individuals.

The State of Israel, in particular, made many offers to the Syrians to gain Cohen's freedom. They offered to exchange all Syrian prisoners in return for a commutation of the death sentence. The Syrians refused. Other suggestions also fell on deaf ears. In one last desperate attempt to save their master spy the Israelis sent a French army officer, a personal friend of Al-Hafez to Damascus. He carried with him a check for a million dollars, and a letter promising to deliver to Syria tractors, bulldozers, medical supplies, and ambulances if Eli Cohen's life would be spared. Al-Hafez, more concerned with his own survival, refused to see the French officer.

On May 18, 1965 in the middle of the night Cohen was clothed in a long white robe and dragged to the Square of Martyrs (El Margo Square) in Damascus. Rabbi Nissim Andalbo, Chief Rabbi of Syria tried to comfort him, and he was allowed to write a farewell letter to his family. Then wrapped by the attending soldiers in an enormous parchment sheet, on which his sentence was inscribed he was hanged. Syria refused to surrender his body to his family (the traces of torture could not be erased). He was buried in the Jewish cemetery of Damascus. An attempt made by Israeli agents to retrieve his body was aborted when the group was discovered and pursued by border guards.

In Israel, Eli Cohen is still remembered as one of the boldest and most successful espionage agents in history and a number of streets, squares and parks bear his name.

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Too Many Abrahams?

Jews: The Essence and Character of a People.

By Arthur Hertzberg and Aron Hirt-Manheimer.

Harper/San Francisco, 294 pp. \$25. *Reviewed by Haim Chertok.*

Since even doodles by Arthur Hertzberg would not be utterly bereft of interest, I opened *Jews: The Essence and Character of a People* with high expectation. And indeed, the central portion of his study, where he hangs a procession of celebrated Jews out to dry on a historical timeline, exposed to the intellectual warmth of his considerable wit and judgment, is very good. The figures range from Uriel da Costa, Shabbtai Zvi, and Baruch Spinoza to Rosa Luxembourg, Franz Kafka, Rosenzweig, and Allen Stuart Konigsberg. In a few deft strokes Hertzberg places each in his/her bio-historical context, then offers a boldfaced characterization. Karl Marx, for example, is "Luther in Red."

For Hertzberg at his best, consider his perfect-pitch portrayal of the meaning of the career of Leon Trotsky from a Jewish slant: "Ever since Spinoza, some of the most brilliant and daring Jewish thinkers conceived of a new world in which there would be neither Jew nor gentile. But this dream of universality was denounced everywhere by the old elites and by the mob as a Jewish plot against the existing order of society. These Bronsteins who wanted to be Trotskys were hated all the more because they were demanding of the Gentiles that they, too, surrender their past."

Unfortunately, to mediate his perception of his exemplary Jews, Hertzberg feels constrained to range them within a set of structuralist categories which sometimes raise far greater difficulties than they resolve. So what, at bottom, has Hertzberg to say about "the essence and character" of the Jewish people? In brief, although every era has borne witness to defectors who, preferring an easier life, have drawn toward the host culture, a saving Jewish remnant has always embraced the ambivalent pleasures of chosenness, the core of which

is the belief that Jews "bear a distinct moral message to the world." Consequently, no matter how debased our external condition, the belief that the Jewish people subsist on a higher moral plane has sustained us.

Jews, Hertzberg concludes, are inherently critical of received wisdom and authority, both external or communal. From this he derives our endemic factionalism. Accordingly, Father Abraham should be viewed as the prototypical Jew less because he exemplifies faithfulness to God but rather because he destroys his father's idols. The Jewish people did not disappear centuries ago, Hertzberg feels, because of a native intransigence, "a wild streak" of defiance which at times has eventuated in rebellion, elsetimes led to martyrdom. Furthermore, at critical historical junctures again and again the Jewish people have succeeded in reinventing who and what they are.

Hertzberg displays a strong attachment to nineteenth century Polish historian Nachman Krochmal, proponent of the periodicity of Jewish historical experience: cycles of birth, ascents to heights, and descents to depths. The uniqueness of the Jewish historical trajectory is that it follows these paths not once or twice, like all other peoples, but again and again and again. To this the author appends a Hertzberg "corollary": the mass of Jews are forever poised between "those who want to continue the voyage through stormy seas and those who jump ship into calmer waters" (the Elie Wiesels versus the Families Albright).

A final paradox: despite millennial longings for redemption to the Promised Land, since the destruction of the First Temple a permanent Diaspora has been a salient feature of Jewish history. Jews, he suggests, were originally nomads, and something of the wanderer has

never left the soul of the Jewish people. More convincingly, Jews carry on because, "they refuse to break the link to their collective past."

Since the above conception of Jewish peoplehood is conventional, wherefore the extraordinary claim voiced in its introduction that it breaks a long-held taboo? "Do the Jews make any contribution to anti-Semitism?," Hertzberg airs rhetorically. "The answer is fundamentally and unavoidably, yes. Their contribution to Jew-hatred is that they insist on being Jews; by definition they [like Father Abraham] challenge the dominant dogmas."

I reread this formulation not once or twice but many times. Aiming, perhaps, to expose the groundlessness of antisemitism, had Hertzberg taken recourse in reductionist tautology? Or even parody? Not a bit. How then was he not implicitly endorsing the otherwise repulsive notion that abrasive, unlovable, contrarian, hypercritical, offensive tendencies were embedded within the essential character of the Jewish people? Should antisemitism not then be viewed as an inevitable, logical, indeed justifiable development? Can such a *reductio ad absurdum* possibly be the bottom line of a lifetime of meditation and study on the mystery of Jewish survival?

On my most recent trip to New York, I accompanied my mother to a crowded cemetery in Queens where for more than an hour we gazed at tombstones in her parents' family plot. We walked among the tombstones inscribed with the names of Joe Kammerman, Haim Avodya Dohrman, Mathew Dohrman, Samuel Weisel, Hilda Weingarten, and a score of others who will never rate passing mention in anyone's historical account of the Jewish people. They lie among tens of thousands of other mostly forgotten Jewish immigrants to America. That something in *their* "essence and character," some "wild streak" significantly contributed to antisemitism strikes me as both ludicrously misconceived and downright offensive.

Why should Woody Allen provide the author with a more exemplary Jewish character type than, say, my grandmother Mary Weisel or her sister Gussie Dohrman, dead these many decades, or, for that matter, than the author's own father to whom he refers with such loving respect in the course of his pages? Perhaps mistakenly, I am driven to conjecture what may underlie the nonsensical hypothesis that

a scandalous Jewish wildness is *the* root cause of antisemitism.

With the exception of Martin Buber and Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, both of them products of the Diaspora, not a single Israeli succeeds in crashing Hertzberg's party. Considering the book's stated theme, this reflects more than passing parochialism. I think anyone who has resided for a time in Israel, where heterogeneity is the overriding impression, would hoot the notion of a specifically Jewish character, an hypothetical *essence*, right off the stage. The fact is that the pretentiousness of this book's subtitle wars with its substantial achievement. Not content with a parade of incisive, bracing, discrete portraits of historical Jewish personages, the author has overreached himself. He has succumbed to the temptation of viewing himself as a contemporary Abraham, a breaker of Jewish idols.

I say "author", but the crux of shared authorship may underlie some of these conceptual tensions. Albeit in small print, Aron Hirt-Manheimer, long-time editor of *Reform Judaism*, is credited as "co-author." The introduction asserts, in fact, that the book was "his idea." Yet with the exception of a single entry referring to "we" who had "completed the last few pages of this chapter early in the morning" (p. 239), the entire text is rendered in first person singular in a voice any attentive reader would immediately identify as Hertzberg's. Well, collaborations are a tricky business. Inasmuch as the core of my unease with *Jews* is that it reads like two books bound in uneasy wedlock, my conjecture is that this one was something of a mismatch. □

With her family, we mourn
the loss of our dear friend

AVIVA KAUFMAN PENN

•

The Bardin Family

Messianism, Zionism and Jewish Religious Radicalism.

By Aviezer Ravitsky, translated by Michael Swirsky and Jonathan Chipman. University of Chicago Press, 312 pp. hardcover, \$48; paperback, \$17.95. 1996.

Reviewed by Jack Fischel.

The establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 marked the return of the Jewish people to their ancestral homeland after almost 2,000 years of exile. The fact that this was accomplished by secular Zionists and not the work of the Messiah created a theological crisis among Orthodox Jewry in its response to the creation of the Jewish state. Ravitsky, who is the chairman of the Department of Jewish Thought at Hebrew University, tells us in his thoughtful and important book, that the world of Orthodox Judaism is divided on the theological meaning of the Jewish state. Although the *Torah* is the binding source that unites Orthodoxy, the matter of Israel's founding has resulted in scriptural differences.

Although for many Jews the belief in a messiah is peripheral to their Judaism, this is not the case with the ultra-Orthodox. As Ravitsky informs us, among the *Haredi* and other Orthodox groups, Israel's founding in 1948 evinced a response whose reverberations continue to be felt in the present-day Jewish state. For example, did the creation of Israel flout the belief which holds that only the Messiah could restore the Jews to their homeland, or was the founding of Israel the beginning of the process leading to the redemption of the Jewish people?

One response was that of the *Haredim*, or those ultra-Orthodox Jews who continue to view life in *Eretz* Israel as a continuation of exile. As the author informs us, one segment of the *Haredi*, the *Neturei Karta*, opposes the existence of the State of Israel because of their belief that only when the Messiah comes can the Jewish people be redeemed from exile. They not only refuse to recognize the legitimacy of the Jewish state but have actively courted the Arab enemies of Israel. On the other end of the ultra-Orthodox spectrum are the accommodationist non-Zionists who maintain that the Jewish people continue to remain

in exile despite "the beginning of the ingathering of the exiles" that accompanied the birth of Israel. Drawing on the sermons of such ultra-orthodox luminaries as the late Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, Ravitsky tells us;

"They unequivocally reject . . . any reality that is not messianic . . . For exile is not a geographic condition that can be overcome by *aliyah* and settlement alone. Neither is exile a political condition that can be corrected by the attainment of national sovereignty. . . . "Because of our sins we were exiled from our land" and "Israel will be redeemed only by repentance."

Ravitsky finds the source of this response to the creation of Israel in both the *Midrash* and the *Talmud*. According to these sources, the Jewish people were made to swear an oath that "Israel would not ascend the wall from exile", that they "would not force the end". Only when the Messiah appeared would the exile come to an end, and it was deemed a grievous sin to force the ingathering of the Jewish people through human effort. As a consequence ultra-orthodox rabbis who shared the metaphysical messianic theology condemned Zionism as the work of Satan and bitterly opposed the movement.

There were, however, other Orthodox rabbis who offered alternative interpretations on the meaning of the oaths. The so-called "harbingers" of Zionism, such as Rabbi Judah Alkalai and Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer, argued that a proper understanding of the oaths called for the Jews to initiate the days of redemption through the resettlement of Zion as the preliminary step in the process leading to the coming of the Messiah. Both rabbis became strong advocates for a return of the Jews to *Eretz* Israel, and are rightly considered the founders of religious Zionism.

Between the views of those ultra-Orthodox

Jews who rejected the legitimacy of Israel, and the religious Zionists, who cooperated in the Zionist effort, was the messianic theological school associated with the Merkaz ha-Rav Yeshiva, and the teaching of the late Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook (1891–1981). Rav Kook, one of the most influential religious sages of our time, attempted to explain both the meaning of the Holocaust and the creation of Israel in messianic terms. For Kook, the Holocaust was God's way of rooting out a debased Jewish culture, the culture of exile. He explained the catastrophe as "a deeply hidden, internal surgery aimed at bringing the Jews to the land of Israel against their will." For Rav Kook and his followers, the two events proved that the messianic age was at hand, whereby God used the secular leadership of the Zionist movement as his instrument to bring about the promised redemption. In this sense, Rav Kook viewed the agnostic and secular leadership of the Jewish state as unwitting agents of God's will. Although the followers of Rav Kook support the Jewish state, their differences with the secular Zionists in regard to the *raison d'être* for Israel's existence was quite profound. Whereas the Zionist movement sought to normalize the condition of the Jewish people through the creation of a nation state, the followers of Rav Kook viewed the Jewish state as a step leading to the End of Days.

For Rav Kook, the State of Israel was a divine creation and as a consequence he wrote, "there can be no retreat from a single kilometer of the land of Israel . . ." Among his disciples in the Gush Emunim settler's movement, there can be no backtracking in the process of redemption. Ravitsky quotes the following from an executive of the Gush Emunim leadership: "we must educate ourselves to the fact that there is no such thing as withdrawal, any more than there are such things as ghosts." It is this type of religious messianic fervor that provided the context that produced Yigal Amir, Yitzhak Rabin's assassin. Admittedly an extreme act, the assassination was not so extreme from the perspective of those who believe that any Israeli government that "surrenders" territory in the age of redemption, is guilty of the most unpardonable sin, the alienation of the Jewish people from the land that God has promised them.

The ideology of messianic determinism as evinced by Gush Emunim and other ultra-orthodox groups, combined with the secular nationalism of the Israeli Right, has created a serious obstacle to the future of the peace process. Inasmuch as many on the Israeli Right refuse to concede territory in the West Bank because it is part of the boundaries of historical Israel, they find a common bond with those among the ultra-Orthodox who oppose "land for peace" for scriptural reasons.

Newsweek (April 20, 1998) recently published an essay on the question of "Whose Israel Is It?", with the thesis that Israel, in the near future, may possibly become a religious country. The article pointed to a birthrate among the Orthodox, which is three times that of their secular counterparts, and to the many nonreligious Jews who are leaving the Jewish state, only to be replaced by religious Jews making *aliyah* to Israel. In fact, some Israeli pundits think that the religious-oriented Shas party could eventually overtake Likud as the leading voice of the right. If true, what do these projections portend for Israel's future?

Unlike the ultra-Orthodox Jews, who do not recognize the state of Zionism, most Orthodox Jews are not focused on the imminent coming of the Messiah or the expectation that the End of Days is upon us. Nevertheless, the ultra-Orthodox represent a constituency who are motivated by these considerations. This, in turn, raises the question as to whether messianic fervor is compatible with the peace process because, despite their relatively small numbers, the ultra-Orthodox are determined not to surrender an inch of the land of Israel. Ravitsky's timely and revealing book sheds light on this aspect of Israeli political culture that is often overlooked in the search for peace between Israel and the Palestinians. □

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Aviva Kaufman Penn

*Eulogy delivered by Elaine S. Mann at funeral services for Aviva Kaufman Penn,
Temple Sinai, Washington, D.C.
December 27, 1998*

I can't imagine a world without Aviva.

It goes on, of course, but it will be a poorer place, less loving, less caring, without that special spirit which warmed the cold places.

I have been asked to speak about Aviva's role in the Jewish community. As both volunteer and professional, her achievements were inseparable from that unique human being which was Aviva. She loved the Jewish people, the Jewish state, the Jewish community but, above all, she genuinely loved the Jews, individually and collectively. She truly believed that all Jews are family, responsible one for the other, and lived that belief.

At an Israel Philharmonic Orchestra concert at the Kennedy Center many years ago, I remember feeling somewhat bemused by the loud and voluble Jewish audience, not at all like the rather sedate concertgoers one normally sees. Aviva, however, glowed. Her Jews, her Israel Philharmonic — together in this wonderful setting. What could be better?

Aviva and her sisters Sham and Pnina grew up in an intensely Jewish home — Labor Zionist, Hebraist, Yiddishist, traditional, cultural, community activist. Her father, Yosef Gootman, is remembered in the annals of Jewish education for mortgaging his printing business to save the Cincinnati Talmud Torah. As a teenager, Aviva experienced the turmoil and deprivation of 1930's Palestine as a student at the famed Herzlia Gymnasium, then served as head of Habonim in Cincinnati. As a newlywed in the years leading up to the establishment of the State of Israel, she returned with her husband, Jay, as students at the Hebrew University. Pregnant with Gideon, her firstborn, she

served as a courier for the Haganah because the British were less likely to intercept a pregnant American. She infused Jay with her love of Zionism and Israel. As he rose in the leadership of American Reform Judaism, Rabbi Jay Kaufman freely credited Aviva and her family with teaching him the love of Zion which ultimately moved the Reform movement toward its present deep involvement with Israel.

Aviva seemed to know everybody. Loving and caring friendships were accumulated throughout her life. She refused nobody and nobody could refuse her. Aviva was simply irresistible, but she never seemed to know it nor trade on it. It was just there, as natural as the sun and the moon and the stars. Wife, mother, daughter, sister, family linchpin, friend, community leader, social worker, teacher, student, creative professional — it was all of a piece, integrated into a life of such high ethical standards that we may always measure our actions by "What would Aviva think?" "What would Aviva do?"

Following Jay's untimely death in 1971, Robert Weiner, Executive Director of the Jewish Community Center of Greater Washington, hired Aviva as the Center's first Director of Outreach. The Center had recently moved onto its first-in-the-nation community campus, located in suburban Maryland, and saw its responsibility to reach out to a growing metropolitan area. Aviva went beyond any narrow boundaries, establishing contacts with and providing services to small outlying communities such as Leonardtown, Frederick, Hagerstown and many others. They were Jews, weren't they, and they — and particularly their children — needed to feel part of the

larger family.

Aviva's creative imagination and boundless energy during her professional service at the Center brought us the Shtetl Fair, demonstrating how this new campus setting could be transformed into a huge inclusive indoor-outdoor community event connecting a new American generation to its Eastern European Jewish roots. She followed this success by reaching out to the far smaller Sephardic Jewish community to develop the Sephardic Festival. The Festival energized the largely neglected Sephardic community which plunged into the project with all the vigor and talents we have now come to expect of them. Its success gave them a pride and recognition which they had never enjoyed before.

When the first Jews started to trickle into Washington from the Soviet Union in the 1970's, it was Aviva who befriended them. They were, after all, long-lost family, who needed to be reclaimed for a Jewish future. She maintained that commitment throughout her life, both to the larger cause and, as in all things, to the individual Jews themselves.

Aviva was the professional sent by the Jewish Community Center to determine if there was an interest in creating a center for the growing Northern Virginia Jewish community. An attempt several years before had failed, but Aviva plunged into the effort with her customary energy. She won the trust of the congregations and the friendship of a new generation of leadership. Aviva shepherded the creation of the Northern Virginia Jewish Community Center and, even after indigenous leadership took over, maintained a loving interest and involvement.

She then turned to the Jewish community in the District of Columbia. Many of its residents felt abandoned when the Center and other Jewish institutions followed the majority of the Jewish community to the suburbs. In addition, many young adults had moved to D.C. to pursue professional careers. There were indeed Jews living in D.C. and they needed to be served and included. Aviva used her genius in relationships, her incredible energy, and her boundless professional talents to ensure the creation of the DCJCC. Both centers were her babies. She took such pride in their achievements.

Aviva took a leave of absence from the Jewish Community Center to go to Israel to care for her younger sister Pnina, a widow with three young sons. Aviva was at the height of her professional accomplishments in Washington but, for her, there was no question. Pnina needed her. The leave of absence stretched into many long months and Aviva never returned to her career.

Aviva's devotion to the Jewish community was a constant thread woven into her life. She served for many years on the Board of the Jewish Community Council and on the Board of Temple Sinai, which was her congregation for most of the 33 years she lived in Washington. She was devoted to Jewish education and served on the Board of Jewish Education. She was active in shaping the Foundation for Jewish Studies and was proud of its role in bringing outstanding scholars to Washington. She retained her commitments to Habonim, Na'amat, and the Labor Zionist Alliance throughout her life. She served as Chairwoman for Volunteers for the Gathering of Holocaust Survivors in 1983. Aviva maintained an active commitment to B'nai Brith, to the American Friends of the Hebrew University, and to ARZA. In the Washington community, she was a volunteer and great supporter of UJA Federation and was a passionate advocate for the essential role it plays in our community — among the many values she shared with her beloved second husband, Matthew Penn.

Some might say that Aviva never met a Jew or a Jewish organization she didn't like. But that would not be true. She hated coercion and extremism in Jewish life. She loved K'lal Yisrael and supported the right of every Jew to find his or her own path. How appropriate it was that her last night on American soil was the wonderful evening less than two weeks ago at the Embassy of Israel when she was honored with the Alumni Achievement Award by the American Friends of the Hebrew University. Aviva was radiant, surrounded by family and friends. Her acceptance speech was her eloquent credo. Who could have imagined that would be the last time?

We are all Aviva's *yorshim* — her inheritors. She has left us the example of her life — a life well-lived, suffused with love and commitment and responsibility. □

Garin 2000 — The Real Deal

By Ezra Weinberg

The final week December, 1998, deserves to be long remembered as a turning point for the Labor Zionist movement in America. Mazkir Jared Matas opened Habonim Dror's annual bi-national Winter Seminar with a declaration that: "Historic moments are not predetermined. Historic moments happen when people like us make them happen." This set the tone for a truly transforming seminar. Before any transforming event there needs to be unrest and discomfort in the minds and hearts of a critical mass of people. There was plenty. Many seminar veterans brought with them a cynical attitude towards these annual seminars. Some felt that the seminars do little to solve our most immediate problem — a serious leadership crisis. Others complained about the lack of *dugma ishit* (personal example) from movement leaders, as well as the rapid attrition rate of our leadership. There was a widespread feeling of unrest and instability in the hearts of the members of HDNA regarding the future of their movement. Difficult discussions were held until the early hours of the morning, concerning the movement malaise. "The expansion of our *machanot* is having a vacuuming effect on the ideology," one chavera said as others nodded in agreement. People are no longer attracted to the ideological message in our movement. "The salience of progressive Zionism and social justice within that framework of old style *chalutzic kibbutznikim* has expired," said another chaver.

The worst part was that Habonim Dror World Mazkir Silvio Joskovitch flew in from Israel and caught us at our moment of despair. Now we could all feel guilty and personally responsible to why Habonim Dror just isn't living up to its potential. What would Silvio re-

port about us to the Tel Aviv office?

However, the tension was broken with some lighter moments. One discussion led Josh Cohen to remark that "We should rename the movement book from 'Builders and Dreamers' to 'Sitters and Talkers'." Another example of this biting humor is evident in an excerpt from the Shabbat oneg (play) from Seminar:

Anna: I want to know about this Labor Zionism. Tell me about it.

Shani: Well, we sit and talk about doing things.

Anna: And then you do them?

Shani: Heavens, no!! Then we educate kids about the activism that we don't do, and then reminisce about it.

Anna: That's great. I want in on some of that action.

But then it happened. Maybe it was the *rikud* on Friday night that brought the members to life. Maybe it was the seminar's theme of "Building a personal relationship with Israel" with *peulot* (activities) topics such as Habonim Dror personal reflection and the Israel connection through art and spirituality, which contributed to the atmosphere. Perhaps people were just tired of complaining, but something made the mood shift again. A sense of hope arose from the Shabbat *ruach* (energy) and chaverim began to respond. Something made movement members reevaluate their commitment to the movement. From that point, each individual was taking personal responsibility for the current movement crisis. Habonim Dror was our movement and only we could sustain it in its hour of need.

And then something happened — Garin Alpayim (2000). Individuals found a way to

turn their frustration into action. All the previous negativity shifted into a positive force. The movement was moving. No longer were we just sitting and talking.

First it was Jared Matas and Shani Friedman. They put themselves out on a limb and announced the formation of the Garin. It did not take long for other chaverim to respond and the response was overwhelming. As Mazkir Olami Silvio remarked afterwards, new garin members popped up "*Kmo Pitriot achari Ha Geshem*" (like mushrooms after the rain). In two momentous hours, Jared and Shani were joined by David Mozersky, Lisa Caldes, Dan Cohen, Shira Shlesinger, Robin Merkel, as well as myself, as we transformed Garin 2000 from two people moving to Israel to a real Garin of eight people, with a Shlav Bet (second group) already in the works.

Shaliach Merkazi David Lehrer, teasing me before I joined, asked "Do you want to remember this historic moment watching it from the sidelines or do you want to tell your grandchildren that you were one of the people on that day who decided to do something that day?" I knew all along I was going to join, but sometimes it's hard to say yes. I didn't want to feel pressured. I tried to make pro and con lists in my head.

Then the moment came.

Garin Alpayim was having its very first real meeting, right in front of me. I was sitting on the outside of the circle. "Move over, Shani," I said. "I'm in." It was just that easy.

The rest of the seminar was a euphoric experience. Concocting and signing a press release for Garin 2000 were formalities that contributed to even more Garin enthusiasm. My name was now in print. I am committed to going to Israel to live in a communal lifestyle in the most idealistic way imaginable. But it felt right. All the goals of the Garin — to work for social change and co-existence, to live a socialist-Zionist life, to actualize ideology — are synonymous with personal goals that I have been developing for a long time. Because I'm currently at Hampshire College studying coexistence, peace-building and conflict transformation, I always knew that I would end up in Israel putting these skills to use where they are needed the most. Garin 2000 gives me the opportunity to actualize my ideology under the best possible circumstances.

Now comes the next step. We are a year and

a half away from our big move, with countless hours' work ahead of us. We face many challenges. We have many decisions to make about our garin. We need more members. We need more money. We need a place to live in Israel. But above all, we need support. With the help of modern technology, we have been able to disseminate the news pretty quickly.

We have faxed and e-mailed our Garin declaration to all corners of the Labor Zionist world, and beyond. Old and new members of the *t'nua* (movement) have already started sending us words of support, offers of help and suggestions. If this initial wave of support from the larger Habonim and LZA community is any indication of what's to come, we have all the reason in the world to feel confident that ***Garin 2000 is the real deal.*** □

Ezra Weinberg is a member of Habonim Dror North America, and Garin 2000. He is currently in his final year of studies at Hampshire College in Amherst, MA.

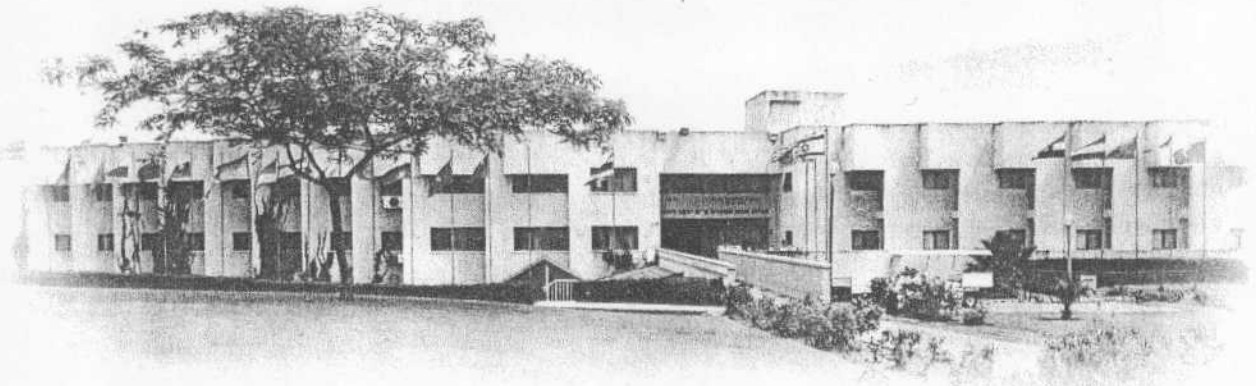
A Survivor's Legacy to Her Children

By Judith Sherman

Bread, always bread;
Stars that lighten the heavens — not brand
your chests;
always, always — water;
Trains to journeys of delight — with seats,
windows,
tickets of return;
no accent;
fathers to hold your children's hand;
children who outgrow their shoes:
your mantle of "Jew" —
of cloth so light
so safe
so *Kol b'Seder*;
mothers — oh yes — mothers —
mothers you can stand up to!
Israel to fill your soul.

and what of Auschwitz memory?
that too is in your legacy.

Judith Sherman, a survivor of the Camps, is a practicing therapist in Cranbury, NJ.



The International Institute at Bet Berl

The newly restructured Institute for International Development, at Bet Berl (near Kfar Saba) is a truly unique institution which offers courses and training to emerging leaders in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union and the Arab world. The Institute grants scholarships to participants who study Israel's economic, social and political institutions, community organiza-

tion practices, and democratic trade union organization, to assist in their own nation-building. Almost 50,000 graduates, from more than 140 countries, represent a vital bridge-building asset for Israel.

The International Institute includes the Levinson Centre for Adult Education, the Jewish-Arab Institute for Regional Cooperation with Palestine and Arab States; and the Arab Publishing

House — all of which are engaged in dialogues, seminars, training courses and joint publications between Israel and its Arab neighbors, as well as between Israel and other countries all over the world. By bringing together people from Egypt, Jordan, Mauritania and Palestine it is making a contribution to advancing peace and social justice — for the mutual benefit of all people. □

Greetings from
The International Institute
in Kfar Saba, Israel.

Building bridges between Israel and emerging countries. Adding its strength to the search for peace. Helping build the civil society.

A project of the National Committee for Labor Israel

Jay Mazur
President

Jerry Goodman
Executive Director

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The Conference

Like absent-minded kisses
touched to the *mezuzah*
the yearned-for arrival
of mountain winds
cooling Jerusalem

are noticed and then
taken for granted
after the furnace breath
of the *chamsin*
laid the city low for days.

The mayor has put himself to bed
with a headache, the conference
was terrible, his own people
strident, irascible,
insultingly blunt,

while the Arabs
overdid themselves —
patient and unctuous,
willing to ignore a slur
after last month's terrorist
bombing in the shuk.

Flying Kites in Pelham*

The cord zipped out, frantic to give
the scarlet kite the altitude it needed
to sail high above the bay, while we
spoke of the dilemmas of every Age
trying to transcend its own perversities,

and what was in Trotsky's mind the moment
before the alpenstock entered his skull,
his last illumination. This park
with its old sycamores, was our first
trysting place when the isobars of history
went skittering towards doom while habit
still played cat's cradle with hope.

It was here we first heard the shots
outside the telephone building in Barcelona,
first felt the despair of Guadalajara.
It was here we let our kites bite
their own umbilicals when the wind brought
the unmistakable howls from the cells
of Lubianka and we knew it was time
to quit playing and understand why
Ben-Gurion
fainted when he heard of the death of
Arlosoroff.

*Pelham Parkway is in the Bronx, N.Y.

CONTRIBUTORS

Susan Hattis Rolef, a political scientist, is our regular Israeli correspondent.

Misha Louvish is a historian and veteran Israeli journalist.

David Rosenthal is a frequent contributor to *Jewish Frontier* and the *Yiddisher Kemfer*.

Dr. Jack Fischel is chairman of the Department of History at Millerville University. His latest book is *Holocaust*, published by Greenwood Press, 1998.

Joseph Adler, a historian, is the author of *The Herzl Paradox* and of *Restoring the Jews to Their Homeland*.

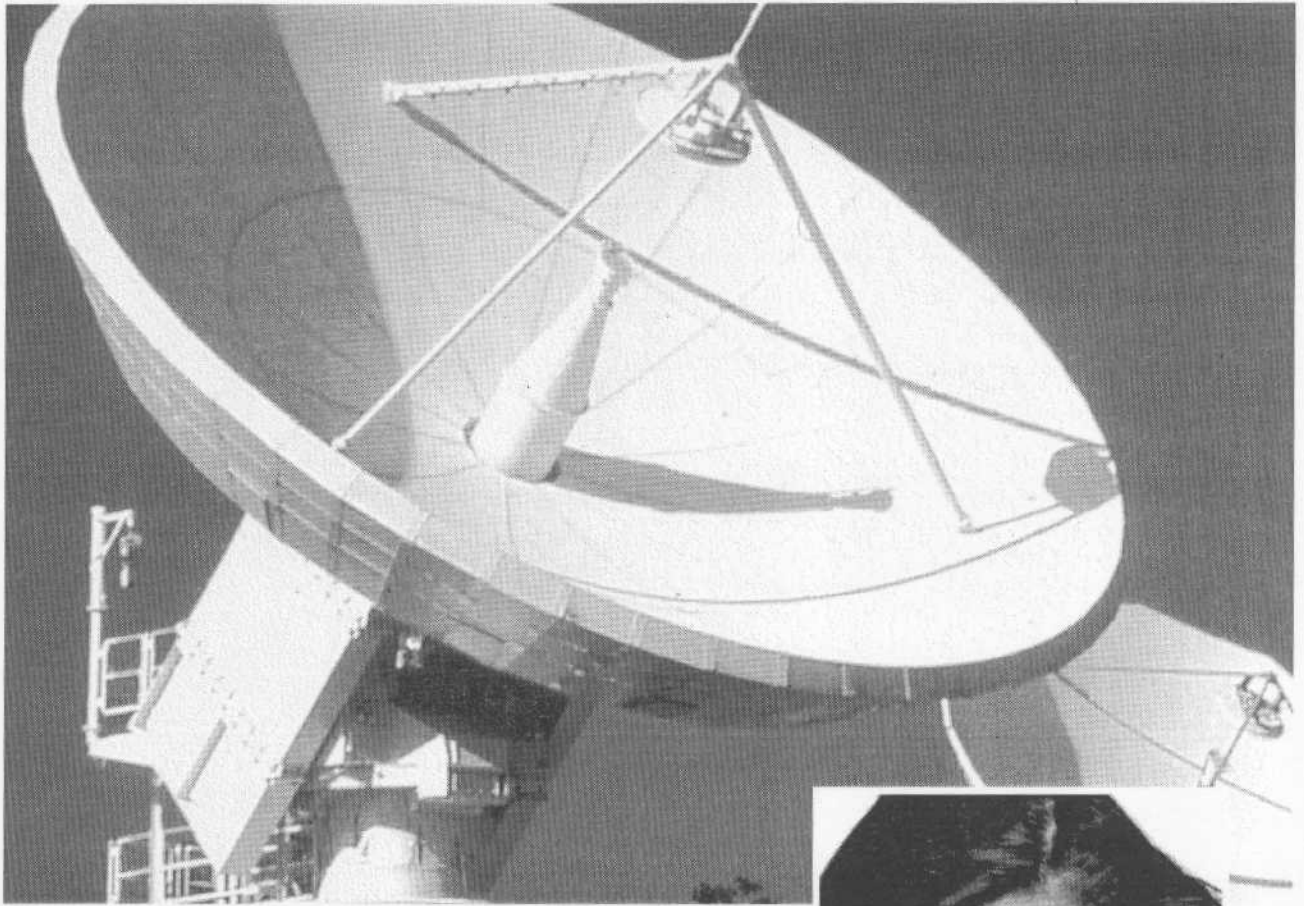
Haim Chertok resides in the Negev town of Yeroham. His newest volume is *Israeli Pre-occupations*. He writes for the *Jerusalem Post*.

Edmund Pennant has appeared frequently in *Jewish Frontier*. His latest collection of poems, *Askance and Strangely*, has been published by Orchises Press.

Elaine Mann of Bethesda, Maryland, recently retired from a top executive post at the Washington Jewish Community Center.

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