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THE TRAVAILS OF ZIONISM

Zionist culture and West European Jewry before the First World War. By Michael Berkowitz. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993. Pp. xviii + 255. ISBN 0-521-42072-5. £29.95.

The kibbutz movement. A history. Volume 1. Origins and growth, 1909–1939. By Henry Near. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992. Pp. xviii + 431. ISBN 0-197-10069-4. £55.00.

The road to power: Herut party in Israel. By Yonathan Shapiro. New York: State University of New York Press, 1995. Pp. vi + 208. ISBN 0-794-06067. $12.95.

The partition of Palestine, decision crossroads in the Zionist movement. By Itzhak Galnoor. New York : State University of New York Press, 1991. Pp.ix + 379. ISBN 0-791-42193-7. $21.95.

Genealogies of conflict: class, identity and state in Palestine/Israel and South Africa. By Ran Greenstein. Hanover, NH and London: Wesleyan University Press and University Press of New England, 1995. ISBN 0-819-55288-7. $27.25.

Any encounter with modern Jewish history invariably runs up against a problem not so much of definition as of morphology. Are we dealing with something which is part and parcel of general human development and, therefore, quite probably of value in a comparative sense, or something so utterly singular that the only terms of reference worth noting belong strictly to itself? The unique versus universal issue has raged, and still continues to rage, over ownership of the Holocaust, an indication that more is at stake here than simply the past. If the origins and development of Zionism have, until recently, not been so fiercely contested, this may be because both the celebrators and detractors of the Palestinocentric Jewish national experiment have so often pre-empted the debate by ringfencing their subject. National histories, particularly of new nation-states, are not unusual either in their hagiographic proclivities, or their tendency towards eliding, omitting, or totally distorting those parts of the narrative likely to cause embarrassment or worse. What is known as Zionist revisionism (i.e. the radical right-wing political movement evolving in the 1920s and 1930s), is a case in point. This tendency was a matter of such sensitivity to the left-leaning political establishment, Mapai, after the founding of Israel, in 1948, that any serious analysis of it remained quite literally a taboo subject, a lacuna which could only be exacerbated by the fact that in 1977, the movement's authentic inheritors, as led by Menachem Begin, after years in the political wilderness, stormed to power – by democratic process – on the crest of a great wave of popular, anti-Mapai feeling. Worse was to follow. If Begin as prime minister was remembered for his leadership of Irgun, which mounted a campaign of anti-British – and then anti-Arab – terrorism, beginning in 1944, his successor, as prime minister, was none other than Yitzhak Shamir, whose own origins lay in another revisionist faction, Lehi, better known as the Stern gang, who, in 1940, had proffered to the German consulate in Beirut a proposal for a Nazi–Zionist alliance. It was aspects of Zionist history such as these which conflicted with the 'beautiful Israel' narrative that the establishment had so energetically promoted. Yet it was these same aspects that gave to some of the state's detractors the opportunity to claim that they were the appropriate yardstick by which to judge an egregious whole: a charge, incidentally,

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which led to the more all-embracing counter-charge that anybody who criticised Zionism was in fact guilty of anti-semitism.[1]

If this highly politicized, not to say utterly polarized, debate undermined efforts to read Zionism either in terms of its various multifaceted leanings and borrowings, or as an experiment in nation- and state-building comparable with those of other post-colonial societies, Zionism's very rationale additionally confirmed the limiting constraints. Modern Zionism, after all, began as a mode of rejection. As Europeans could not properly accommodate Jews in their social or political organisms, Zionists argued that Jews, as a matter not simply of necessity but also of personal salvation, had spatially, as well as emotionally, to separate themselves from other peoples and search instead for their own authentic national roots, inextricably bound up with the land itself: *eretz Israel*.

If the above statement, however, could be taken as grounds for Zionist singularity, it could equally be read from the exact opposite standpoint. Zionist intellectuals 'imagined' a Jewish national community pretty much in the same way, as Benedict Anderson has shown,[2] the elites of other would-be nations 'imagined' theirs. Zionist strivings to distance themselves from European ideas and movements only confirmed how utterly they were in its debt. It took just over fifty years from the first Zionist congress to the creation of the state of Israel. It has taken the best part of the fifty since then, for a fully-rounded, mature, warts and all, historiography of Zionism to develop, though even now one sometimes wonders how much Israeli scholars working within Israel can completely shrug off some of the country's most cherished myths. True, there has been a recent and exciting revisionism (historical this time!) involving some excellent critiques of some of the more problematic – and painful – episodes in the Zionist saga,[3] but these have not always been popular with an Israeli public. Some of the more adventurous work has been done either by Israeli scholars working outside the country, Greenstein's book being one example, or by non-Israelis, mostly Jewish, sometimes Palestinian, mostly operating from North American universities. The five books reviewed here reveal to varying degrees the new maturity. Diverse as they are, all are concerned with Zionism in its various manifestations and/or the processes – and dilemmas – of Jewish nation-making, primarily up to 1948. Only two, however, those of Berkowitz and Near, are archivally based historical studies, while Shapiro, Galnoor and Greenstein use their political science backgrounds to develop more theoretical considerations about the nature of Zionist ideology and practice.

This certainly does not preclude the historian, Berkowitz, from providing a provocative and novel thesis on the emergence of political Zionism. While a great deal has been written on this score, Berkowitz not only offers a strongly Andersonian slant but one which tackles a key riddle; namely the involvement of so many western, bourgeois Jews in the Herzlian-led project. Eastern Jewish intellectuals, in the pre-1914

[1] See Uri Davis, *Israel: utopia incorporated* (London, 1977) and Lenni Brenner, *The iron wall. Zionist revisionism from Jabotinsky to Shamir* (New York, 1984) for strongly ideological examples of the former. Robert Wistrich, ed., *The left against Zion. Communism, Israel and the Middle East* (London, 1979) for examples of the rebuttal.

[2] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities; reflections on the origins and spread of nationalism* (London, 1983).

[3] One might particularly note Benny Morris, *The birth of the Palestinian refugee problem, 1947–1949* (Cambridge, 1989); Avi Shlaim, *Collusion across the Jordan: King Abdullah, the Zionist movement and the partition of Palestine* (Oxford, 1988); Yaacov Shavitt, *Jabotinsky and the revisionist movement, 1925–1948* (London, 1988); Jospeh Heller, *The Stern Gang: ideology, politics and terror, 1940–1949* (London, 1995); Ilan Pappe, *The making of the Arab-Israeli conflict* (London, 1992).

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period, had grounds enough for 'longing for Zion' but not only did the 'ideology of emancipation' militate against such sentiments in western Europe but the largely successful integration of Jewish business and professional elites into, for instance, British or German public life, made their involvement less than urgent, despite rumblings of anti-semitism. Berkowitz cogently suggests how Zionism overcame these obstacles through its emphasis on a secular rather than religiously based national culture. In particular, he notes how aspects of a widespread, negative *fin-de-siècle* portrayal of Jewry, to which even affluent, assimilated Jews would have been sensitive, were turned around by Zionism into positive images and symbols. Alleged physical degeneracy, effeteness and nervous disorder – shades of Sander Gilman here[4] – were replaced in Zionist self-congratulation by physical training, gymnastic displays and the discovery of a supposed 'new Jewish man'. The tall and imposing congress founder, Herzl, became in paintings and postcards the role-model for this new muscular and manly type. The paraphenalia of nationhood, including a flag and a national anthem (sounding disconcertingly like *ma vlast*), followed. Western Jews were thus encouraged to participate in Zionism by embracing symbols and values with which they already would have been familiar and with which they would have readily identified. Indeed, in this version of Zionism, it was not a case of rejecting European culture so much as proving that the Jewish national version was not simply equal to, or even concordant with, so much as a culmination of it. It was this identification of *Kultur* with *Zionismus* which thus gave to its western adherents the sense not that they were abandoning national values and identity which they already possessed, so much as supplementing them.

Berkowitz, thus, makes the important point that, in the case of Zionism, it was those who already were imbued with the idea of nationalism who were the most likely to be receptive to it. This, of course, is only half the story. By no means all western Jews were similarly enamoured and Berkowitz does not go out of his way to offer an explanation as to why Franco-Jews in particular, with the exception of a few notable individuals, such as Bernard Lazare, were so thoroughly and dismissively anti-Zionist. Absolute adherence to the early movement seems to have been strongest amongst those who had been most disappointed, or jilted, by a former – national – love.

Perhaps, this explains why the focus of Berkowitz's study is German Jewry. Perhaps, too, it throws light on another of Zionism's paradoxical ingredients; its anti-bourgeois undercurrents. Let there be no mistake that early Zionism was an essentially middle-class condition, but amongst the bourgeois youth who joined it, there was also more than a whiff of rebellion. In the early congresses which Berkowitz charts, Herzl's overtly political agenda increasingly had to bow to the vociferious demands of the *kulturisten*, mostly young East European upstarts, such as Chaim Weizmann, who demanded that the congresses give their full attention, and funds, to their cultural agenda. Most precisely, this meant acknowledging the ascendancy of Hebrew as the national language, a rupture, if there ever was one, given that hardly anybody at this stage was speaking it as a daily vernacular. Speaking, writing, thinking or even dreaming in Hebrew were much more than creating a national language, they were creating something that at this juncture did not exist: a Jewish nation.

The idea that the Jewish masses of eastern Europe could be harnessed to, and transformed by, a national cultural project was propelled in large part by a distaste, bordering on contempt, not so much for the physical conditions of those masses, but for a diaspora *mentalité* which was, allegedly, at the root of their degradation, if not

[4] Sander Gilman, *The Jew's body* (New York and London, 1991) and more recently, *Franz Kafka, the Jewish patient* (New York and London, 1996).

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depravity. If Berkowitz's study inevitably strays from his western European subject here, it is because it was *kulturisten* who felt the shame of this condition so keenly and who played such a seminal role in seeking a way out. They were not, however, alone. Every east European Jewish intellectual worth his (and, in a few notable instances, her) salt had at least a mental programme for transcending the conditions of the diaspora. The problem for the Zionists was that these by no means all pointed in the direction of Palestine, or even nationalism.

Why, indeed, go to Palestine when the true struggle, so argued Jewish-born socialists, was at home in the Russian Pale of Settlement? It was all very fine for Zionist congresses to appropriate Palestine with folksy postcards or stamps depicting Jewish 'peasants', tilling the land against biblical backdrops but where were these peasants to be found? Bar a few settlers growing vines with Arab labour, on land provided by Edmond de Rothschild, there were no – Jewish – peasants. As for the great Jewish masses, even the quip about a rich Jew, helping a second Jew to send a third, poor Jew to Palestine was untrue; the poor Jews of eastern Europe were marching with their feet to the nearest port of New York-destined embarkation. There might be socialist theoreticians of the Ber Borochov ilk, who would argue that they ought to be going instead to Palestine, but the task awaiting them there was so monumental that only the most committed, if not masochistic, believers were likely to attempt it.

Any book on the early kibbutzim cannot but be a tribute to those who were so willing. Near's is the first comprehensive study in the English language but, though it extols the unique elements of this critical pioneering phenomenon, it is at the same time careful to acknowledge the European origins and ideas of its founders. Though all the initial *kvutzot* were drawn from the impoverished, heavily traditional milieu of the Pale, or Rumania, its cadres were usually educated, middle-class, and wholly secular in outlook. Distinct groupings, such as, for instance, an emerging Hashomer Hatzair (young guard), additionally turn out to have come largely from very well assimilated and Polonized Galician backgrounds, often with strong Viennese connections. Romantic, anti-industrialist notions were a spur to their readiness to engage in agriculture, though their willingness to make of this a 'religion of labour' suggests other possibly conflicting, ideological convictions. Certainly, the impact of European socialist movements and more particularly the bolshevik experiment were writ large on the debates of competing kibbutz movements as they gathered strength and momentum in the inter-war years. War communism, Stakhanovism and the idea of a 'great leap forward' were all considered with regard to the specificity of Palestinian conditions under the mandate. Moreover, the need to create a primary national base, against a backdrop of worsening conditions in eastern and central Europe, gave a special urgency to a kibbutz self-understanding and self-image geared less to romantic individualism and more to a subordination to the collective will.

As one would expect, Near warmly charts the improvisatory aspects of this experiment in communal living, if not political economy. If its breakthroughs in communal child-rearing and education represented its most radical and far-reaching ingredients, he does not eschew its harsher side: its fanaticism, rigidity, self-exploitation, cruelty and charges of deviation. To train in a Polish 'kibbutz' farm, or to join a newly formed one in the Huleh swamps in Galilee, must have seemed to many of the more faint-hearted less a promise of personal fulfilment and more a sentence of unremitting misery. Beautiful scenery could rarely make up for semi-starvation conditions, lack of privacy and constant demands for self-sacrifice. Near hints that women suffered particularly badly. In spite of all the rhetoric of sexual equality this was, when all was said and done, a

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male vision of the world recreated. The obvious heroism of the 'fellowship of the roads' in the early 1920s – kvutzot could also be peripatetic roadbuilders as well as farmers – or the 'tower and stockade' kibbutz-building in the teeth of armed Arab revolt in the late 1930s, could not disguise the massive attrition-rate. Kibbutzim survived only because there were always more hopeful, young German or Polish Jewish idealists to replace those who left though exhaustion or disillusionment. Even then, the idea, propagated by the early movement, Gedud Ha'avoda, in the 1920s, that the whole *yishuv* (the Jewish community in Palestine) would be integrated into a single all country mass kibbutz was clearly a non-starter.

So long as the movements remained voluntarist, they had to make up for lack of numbers with revolutionary élan and enthusiasm. Only results could convince the leadership of the Jewish Agency that their projects were worthy of priority treatment and hence the allocation of limited funds and resources. That Palestinian land purchase by the Agency's Jewish National Fund meant, in effect, a charter for settlement by kibbutzim or moshavim, their sister co-operatives, did not, however, quell fierce debates over exactly what their relationship was, not only to the 'bourgeois' Agency, to the broader workers movement represented by the Histadrut, or, indeed, to each other. The certitude of their own ideological correctness only fuelled their rivalry; their sense of being a revolutionary vanguard only made more perplexing the nature of their political and cultural role in a society which increasingly was not made up of self-motivated pioneers.

While Near, thus, provides explanation for their initial survival and later, accelerated momentum, he rather plays down the intrinsic tension between their utopian vision of society and the means by which they proposed to arrive there. In the 1930s this was increasingly posed by the two primary obstacles in the path of the Jewish national home: the British and the Arabs. The British retreat from the terms of the Balfour declaration, culminating in the white paper of May 1939, might confirm kibbutzniks in their jaundiced appraisal of British imperialism, but the view of Yitzhak Tabenkin, of Kibbutz Me'uhad, the dominant kibbutz movement, that there was 'no fundamental moral difference between Nazism and Britain and France' (p. 358), still reads as something of a shock. Kibbutz Me'uhad, at this juncture, closely aligned itself with the Soviet Union, a position which led Tabenkin to argue that the Nazi-Soviet Pact, agreed a few months after the white paper, was a 'pardonable necessity' (p. 358). But this sort of view was surely only a few steps away from radical revisionists like Avraham Stern, who were at the very same time contemplating the idea of a Zionist alliance with Nazi Germany as the best way of getting rid of perfidious Albion. If Near does not pursue the possible linkages – mental if not actual – between radical leftists like Tabenkin and radical rightists who commenced an open armed struggle against the British under Stern, and later Begin, he is even more coy about kibbutz attitudes towards 'the Arab question'.

Hashomer Hatzair, it is true, spouting sentiments of fraternal unity between peoples, favoured in principle the idea of a bi-national state.This did not prevent it, however, from joining in the 1936–39 rush to create and consolidate new Zionist settlements. Given that the Jewish Agency line in this period was supposedly one of *havlagah* – restraint – in the face of Arab attacks, the drive to establishing 'facts on the ground', such as Kibbutz Me'uhad's settlement, Ma'oz, founded the day before publication of the Peel report, in part of the country clearly demarcated by Peel as part of a would-be Arab state, seems rather remarkable. At least Tabenkin was unambiguous in his insistence that the future Jewish society could only be achieved by securing its national

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borders, though even here his argument carried an ideological spin, in the claim that a small state, without sufficient land, would inevitably become an mirror-image of the Pale; an essentially urban ghetto, full of middleman traders, entirely contradicting his grand vision of a workers' society.

The idea that there might be some cross-reference between kibbutzniks of ideologically Marxist hue and ultra-rightists, with a rhetoric, behaviour and symbols readily comparable with the fascist or para-fascist movements of their contemporary Europe, is not one with which Near, or more obviously Shapiro, in his study of the orgins of the Herut party, wish to engage. This is itself intriguing given that Near provides information on one early hero of the kibbutz movement, Joseph Trumpeldor, equally contested by revisionists as one of theirs. Trumpeldor was certainly involved in the early *kvutzot* and in Hechalutz, the training organization for young worker immigrants. But his unusual Russian professional miltary background, his involvement with the creation, in the first world war, of a Jewish 'legion' – through his close association with the founder of revisionism, Vladimir Jabotinsky (a critical connection not mentioned by Near) – and finally his martial death, in 1920, defending a frontier settlement, Tel Hai, from marauding Arabs, marked him out also as an exemplary model for emulation by Betar, Jabotinsky's para-military youth movement.

This historical cross-connection is all the more resonant when one remembers that followers of Tabenkin, the doctinaire socialist who yet insisted so forcefully on the interelationship between settlement and security, were, after the victories of 1967, able to join forces with disciples of Begin and Stern to form the maximalist Land of Israel Movement, dedicated to the retention and consolidation of the captured west bank territories.[5] Palestine as Israel, of course, had always been Tabenkin's ultimate 'territorial' agenda, as, indeed, it had been for many socialists. But the parties of the left had also historically prided themselves on a pragmatism which, while pushing out the boundaries of the would-be state as far as they might go, also recognized that there would be limits to the process. Revisionist demands, for instance, for an *eretz Israel* on both sides of the Jordan, could be suitably dismissed as hysterical and shrill. While after 1967 that particular idea remained firmly off the agenda, regional military dominance did carry with it, at the very least, the possibility of a new national political constellation consisting, in part, of formerly bitterly hostile groupings.

Back in the 1930s while kibbutzniks might claim that they were doing what right-wingers could only rhetorically bluster about, it was the latter who were having the major success in mobilizing Jewish youth, especially in Poland. Youth, of course, had always been central to the socialist-Zionist message and to the kibbutzim in particular, which, in critical respects, were simply youth movements. But the pre-second world war decade saw them lose the battle for youth to Betar, time and time again.

Shapiro's slim volume approaches these origins of Begin's Herut party from the standpoint of what he calls Mapai's 'spiritual dominance' (p.1) in Israeli politics. In other words, he is concerned to understand how a minority party of 'outsiders' with a notably weak apparatus, was able to sustain itself on the political margins for the best part of thirty years, before it finally broke through to become the basis of the Likud party, currently in power. Implicitly, however, Shapiro seems to be suggesting not so much that Herut was either marginal or minority so much as simply late on the scene. The 'core' leadership of post-1948 Israel was after all, drawn from the ranks of the second aliyah, socialist ideologues born in the Russian empire, before or in the 1890s,

[5] See Colin Shindler, *Israel, Likud and the Zionist dream* (London and New York, 1995), p. 191.

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with David Ben-Gurion as their acknowledged leader. They had already firmly established and entrenched their power in the *yishuv* of the mandate, before a new generation of Polish Zionists, born in the period 1910–20, had, mostly, even reached adolescence.

Quite logically, Shapiro thus locates the origins of Herut's right-wing ultra-nationalism in the frustrations of the Polish environment of the 1930s. Here was a whole generation of Jewish youth, who had neither prospects nor hope at home, yet who, at the same time, had very little grounds for identifying with the socialist experiment underway in Palestine. Poorly, more narrowly educated than their heavily secularized Russian predecessors, Shapiro characterizes them as a semi-intelligentsia prone to emotional, even mystical solutions to their problems. In short, he proposes that their visionary politics was as much Polish as Jewish, and as much about frustrated status, as class. That Jabotinsky was able to mould out of this, in Betar, a youth movement, which in terms of its principles, behaviour and symbolism was largely indistinguishable from that of other European radical rightist movements of this period, is already well-known. Shapiro does not measurably develop our understanding of this process except, perhaps, in his focus on one particular ingredient, namely the *Führerprinzip*. Jabotinsky's insistence on the absolute allegiance of the whole revisionist movement to himself and hence to his own personal wisdom, however, increasingly became a script to which young supporters were unable to subscribe, as he attempted to combine an emphasis on a muscular militarism with continued faith in the British. For those like Abba Achimeir, who was categorical in his assertion that revisionism equalled fascism, or the young Betari, Menachem Begin, the whole point of a national military force was to use it, even if that meant taking on the British.

If Jabotinsky, in the period before his death in 1940, found his own leadership undermined from within, by his refusal to declare a 'revolt', Begin, who, in 1944, did so, nevertheless constructed his own Herut party around the same leadership principle. If Shapiro portrays Begin, the politician, as a study in unremitting failure and goes on from this to characterize Herut as atypical and essentially aberrant, he is hard-pressed to explain convincingly its ultimate electoral success, but suggests that Herut was saved by some luck; the issue of German reparations in the 1950s and the post-1967 'revolt' of the 'second Israel' – Jews from middle eastern countries, marginalized, like the original Herutniks, by the Mapai establishment. He fails to explain the continued right-leaning and hawkish orientation, in recent decades, of both Mapai and Likud administrations. Instead we might consider Shapiro's study as evidence of the frustration and pessimism of Israel's liberal intelligentsia, an intelligentsia which regards Likud's first electoral success in 1977 as a rupture with Israel's 'correct' political trajectory and which further blames it for creating a whole political culture in which parties appeal, via emotional posturings, to the man in the piazza rather than getting on with the job of reasoned – and reasonable – 'bureaucratic politics' (p.171).

The problem with this thesis, is not only does it sound like classic liberal sour grapes – all for democracy so long as it is not government by the demos – but also becauses it refuses to acknowledge that the problems of Israel today may actually be quite deeply embedded, even systemic. From the historical standpoint, an alternative approach to understanding Herut might thus emphasize not the unbridgeability between socialists and rightists of the 1930s and 1940s but rather the commonality of some of their goals. Thus Beginists, for instance, were not alone, or even avant-garde, in postulating the use of force to get rid of the British; Chaim Arlosoroff, Ben-Gurion's right-hand man, had seriously but confidentially proposed the idea as early as 1932; and a decade later the

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leftist-controlled Haganah and Palmach were carefully but secretly preparing for warfare, in the interests of state formation; while the best Irgun and Lehi could offer, despite all their mythology about single-handedly getting rid of the British, was hit and run terrorism.

This is not to say that there were no major ideological differences between the mainstream and revisionists, simply that the major distinction was not about ends but means. Some of this comes across in Galnoor's book about Zionist decision making in response to the Peel report recommendations of 1937, though one suspects that he, like Shapiro, is making a quite contemporary point about the dangers of emotionally-laden Zionist nationalism. That this, in the 1990s, has become heavily associated with the uncompromising maximalism of much of Likud and religious fundamentalists further to the right, is not directly developed here. But this simply makes his paean to Ben-Gurion's highly pragmatic and instrumentalist diplomacy of the 1930s all the more stark.

In substance, Galnoor's rather overlong work is a detailed, psephological analysis of the Zionist parties' response to the British government proposal to partition Palestine into Jewish and Arab states. That the territorial area of the proposed Jewish state would be only some 5000 square miles, compared with the 120,000 square miles which Zionists assumed were on offer when the Palestine mandate originally included Transjordan, is at the nub of Galnoor's question: how big does the Jewish state (or indeed any state) have to be? Does it have to be in all of the biblical land of Israel, a maximalist position arguing that sovereignty runs from the Nile to the Euphrates? If not, what then become one's criteria for assessing its viability? In the 1930s this was all the more imponderable, as there were practically no givens, only variables, with the yishuv a definite minority – except in very specific enclaves – throughout Palestine, yet with a vast potential reservoir of Jewish immigrants in the diaspora, especially in eastern and central Europe. It was with these Jews in mind and in the knowledge that they were in imminent danger where they were, which led to so much consternation, even bitterness against the Peel proposals, at the twentieth Zionist congress. But as Galnoor shows, the wide spectrum of opinion represented therein cannot be explained in straight left–right terms. Thus, the leftist Tabenkin was, as one might expect, extremely hostile to the small state, but so too was Ben-Gurion's close friend, Berl Katznelson, who saw the whole thing as a British imperial ruse to ensure their long-term domination of Palestine. On the other hand, Jabotinsky, always considered to be the most vociferous territorial maximalist, may well have been willing to accept partition on instrumentalist grounds, while the ultra-religious Agudat Israel, some of whose followers are better known today for their insistence on control of the whole 'land', was, in 1937, more concerned with 'torah' and 'people' than with 'territoriality'.

Galnoor shows, however, how these various factions and fractions were bent to Ben-Gurion's will, namely to an acceptance of the partition proposals. Certainly, his 'double-formula' whereby the congress officially rejected the recommendations but at the same time gave the Jewish Agency the mandate to negotiate further, was an ingenious device designed not only to achieve a fragile Zionist consensus but also to make it appear as if partition was to be forced upon the Agency by British *force majeure*. In fact, Ben-Gurion, with Weizmann, had been privately in cahoots with the British all along, while it was they, not the Agency, who ultimately got cold feet about the idea. Galnoor is at pains to applaud Ben-Gurion's statesmanship in grasping the nettle at this critical juncture and in lamenting the opportunity lost in its abandonment. Both the radical right and radical left were increasingly involved in new strategies at this time to

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bring in more immigrants, in defiance of the the British government's increasingly stringent quotas. The granting of sovereignty would have not only made the process legal; it might have saved millions of European Jews from destruction.

The problem is that this 'might have been' salvation for the Jews was simply a harbinger of the separate fate of the Palestinian Arabs in 1948. Ben-Gurion's acceptance of the 'small' state was never intended to be anything other than provisional. Within a generation and an influx of maybe one or two million Jews, the assumption was that a sovereign Israel would be legitimated in its demands for further territorial expansion. But even a 'small' state posed the question: what would become of the Arab majority population within it? Jewish sovereignty, in these terms, was utterly paradoxical. Jabotinsky foresaw a solution in a mass Jewish immigration and settlement which would effectively swamp the Arabs without actually removing them. Ben-Gurion's view was not only much harder; it also had an ideological sting. The development of a planned economy which would absorb so many immigrants demanded the economic elimination of the Arabs. This explicitly required compulsory land purchase; in 1937 terms, of three quarters of the land in the would-be state. So, where would the Arab *fellahin* go? Ben-Gurion knew. They would, in the utterly euphemistic language of the time, be 'transferred' to other Arab states.

The comparison between Ben-Gurion and Jabotinsky on this critical matter is not only revealing in clarifying which one was the arch-nationalist; it also throws light on the critical flaw in Galnoor's analysis. Ben-Gurion is held up as a paragon of how things ought to be done, i.e. give way on territory and in return get peace. But in 1937 there was no intention that Arabs, at least not Palestinian ones, were to be party to this arrangement, not least because the *yishuv*, even under the impact of the 1936 revolt, refused to recognize that they were dealing with an authentic nation-in-waiting. Instead, negotiations would be entirely with the British, albeit with the emir Abdullah waiting in the wings, to absorb the remains of Palestine in his British sponsored Transjordan. The Palestinians themselves were expected to be passive recipients of this fait accompli and, though Galnoor charts something of the implications of this for them, he neither utilizes Nur Masahla's devastating book on the concept of 'transfer' in Zionist political thought to spell this out,[6] nor does he give any indication that he himself considers them to have been a legitimate part of the equation.

This is all the more ironic given that the most relevant recent comparison with Galnoor's 1937 'decision crossroads' is not a Zionist but a Palestinian one. It was Arafat, in 1991, just prior to the Madrid conference, who had to convince a far from enthusiastic Palestine national council, in effect the equivalent of a Zionist congress, to accept not even a state, but a national authority on residual Palestinian lands the size of a postage stamp. If Galnoor's book purports to be a tribute to Zionist statesmanship for knowing when to give away so much, it might be more appropriately dedicated to the Palestinians for accepting so little.

If Galnoor's otherwise well-intentioned study nevertheless betrays something of classic Zionist myopia when it comes to the Palestinian Arabs, this only serves to confirm the outstanding qualities of Greenstein's. His is the only one here reviewed that attempts to place them firmly in the frame and in an ambitious synthesis which covers the whole period of their interaction with the Zionists, through to 1948. Furthermore, it does so by comparing parallel, though often highly distinct developments, in South Africa, in this same period.

[6] Nur Masahla, *Expulsion of the Palestinians: the concept of 'transfer' in Zionist political thought, 1882–1948* (Washington, D.C., 1992).

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This sort of comparison has been attempted previously, and Greenstein could be accused of simply repeating hackneyed explanatory formulae. But he does not do this. Though with methodological considerations clearly very much in his sights, his nuanced approach is unwilling to accept modernization or dependency theories to explain the 'inevitability' of Zionist victory, while being equally wary of the distinction between Jews and Arabs founded on some purported class analysis. On the contrary, Greenstein is at pains to emphasise that the struggle between the two communities was anything but *simply* economic. On the Zionist side, he takes the 1913 observation of Arthur Ruppin, charged by the Zionist organisation with oversight of its colonizing projects, to be significant; 'Those enterprises in Palestine which are most profitable for the businessman are frequently of least benefit to our national task: and *vice-versa*, many enterprises which are unprofitable from a business point of view are of supreme national importance.' (p. 69) This emphasis on long-term nation-building at the expense of short-term commercial gain, even efficiency, gives a clue to a crucial dissimilarity with the South African experience.There, from the start, native populations were to be incorporated within a white-settler dominated structure, which also had to create from scratch economic relationships with the wider world. Zionism, on the contrary, despite the availability of cheap Arab labour, chose to reject this route in favour of the strategic needs of nation and state formation. If this led, on the one hand, to Arab exclusion from the Jewish labour market and broader political economy – a standpoint, incidentally, rejected by the revisionists – it also, on the other, confirmed that Palestinians were anything but passive bystanders watching someone else's national saga.

Greenstein may be overstating his case when he argues that a distinct Palestinian identity formation was already in the making prior to 1914. Neither a developed political culture, the administrative importance given by the Ottomans to the sanjak of Jerusalem, nor the quickening pace of interaction with the world economy via the port of Jaffa, in themselves add up to his contention. But then the origins of Arab nationalism are themselves much disputed. And if a specific Palestinian variant had a slow and complicated birth, at least Greenstein is prepared to acknowledge its paradoxical features. The most obvious of these is that a sense of national identity emerged as the community became more internally differentiated, not to say polarized. This had much to do with the impact of Zionists.The role of the market was already transforming land into a commodity before their significant arrival, but their land hunger in the 1920s gave rich Palestinian landowners undreamt of opportunities to dispense with it at the expense of tenant farmers. These were often the same landowners who were supposedly leading patriotic forums in defence of Palestine. No wonder the explosion, when it came in the mid-30s, came from a grass-roots, shaped and given direction and legitimacy by militant Islam.

As Greenstein himself notes, there are ironies in these developments. Zionists fearful of a close understanding between muslims and christians, in the 1920s, in favour of a united Palestinian cause, attempted discreetly to foster a specifically Muslim National Association. While these efforts mostly failed, the same basic strategy was pursued by Mossad, in the 1980s, in its attempts to undermine the PLO. Through subterfuge they backed Hamas, an Islamic fundamentalist movement, which took its inspiration from the radical liberationist doctrines of Sheik 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam, who was killed by the British while leading a band of fighters in 1935. The Qassamite movement sparked off severe inter-communal warfare as often as it took the struggle to the British and the Zionists. Presumably this is what Mossad were seeking in their own high-risk strategy. *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.*

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But if there is a wider contemporary resonance – and relevance – in Greenstein's analysis of pre-1948 Zionist–Palestinian competition for the same land, it lies in what he has to say about the latter's capacity to organize and sustain its own independent existence. With the land itself largely held by peasant farmers – even in 1948 the Zionists had title rights to a mere 7% – and in population terms still at this juncture a quite significant majority, Greenstein argues that the Palestinian Arabs were in a position to stonewall the creation of a Jewish state indefinitely.This implicit strength was further enhanced by what he argues to have been, at the very least, the potentiality for the capitalization of the Arab part of the economy. In other words, he seems to be saying, if they had got their act together, the Palestinian Arabs would have been in a position, unlike the otherwise also very resilient native populations of South Africa, to have effectively competed in their own right not only *vis-à-vis* the Zionists but in terms of a global economy.

That the Palestinians were politically and militarily defeated in 1948, subsequently massively dislocated or dispersed and finally, in part, integrated, South African-like, as so many day labourers in the Israeli economy, does not nullify their underlying resilience. In 1928 secular Zionist revisionists, attempting to make capital out of a muslim–Jewish dispute at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem, proclaimed that the muslims were attempting 'to rob a live nation of the last of its relics' (Greenstein, p. 223). In 1996 when their equally secular Likud successors sanctioned an archeological tunnel under the most sacred parts of muslim Jerusalem, to the ecstatic applause of Jewish fundamentalists, Palestinians might have felt justified in arguing that the boot was on the other foot. With the future of the peace process still hugely uncertain, historians of Zionism may yet wish to consider the dangers not only of riding roughshod over another nation's icons and symbols but, indeed, of attempting to ignore a people who remain fiercely and defiantly intact.

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