

“STATE-FORMING ZIONISM” AND THE PRECEDENT FOR LEADERSHIP – T. HERZL, V. JABOTINSKY AND D. BEN-GURION

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The three dominant Zionist politicians (Herzl, Jabotinsky and Ben-Gurion) differed significantly almost in all aspects. The ideological legacy left behind by Herzl was either largely ignored or freely interpreted. His stature as an inviolable symbol of the Zionist movement offered an additional outlet, however. V. Jabotinsky, by a self-declared adherence to this legacy, tried to justify and legitimize his own ostracized trend and turn it into a legal successor of Herzlian Zionism. The interpretation of Herzl he proposed was not left untouched by his own ideas that had not much in common with Herzl himself. Jabotinsky and Ben-Gurion are mostly perceived as major antagonists of the pre-state era. All three men shared, however, some similar viewpoints as well. Their preference of a common goal (defined either as a national, state or collective interest) over particularistic values and the authoritarian style of leadership combined with some democratic norms and values demonstrate clearly a certain amount of affinity existing among them on issues that are in no way marginal.

INTRODUCTION

As the application of quotation marks suggests, the term “state-forming Zionism” should be understood as an auxiliary term serving the purpose of designating some common ideological aspects attributed to otherwise different political trends; it is not the aim of the article to incorporate a new designation into the terminology surrounding Zionist historiography. As far as I am aware, the secondary sources do not use any such designation of any political or ideological trend within the Zionist movement either. The most appropriate equivalent in the contemporary terminology to the above-mentioned designation would be the term political Zionism. The term as such is, however, associated with a somewhat antiquated discourse, over the methods and tactics, prevailing within the Zionist Organization prior to WWI. Besides, the trend of political Zionism in the retrospect represents a subcategory of another trend – general Zionism. It does not suit, therefore, the needs of the article, which intends to devote some attention

to certain ideological aspects of other Zionist trends (Revisionism and Labour Zionism) and their leading exponents.

The choice of T. Herzl, V. Jabotinsky and D. Ben-Gurion is not a coincidence. Each of them represents a major figure of Zionist politics with a distinct ideological trend and power base of its own. The same cannot be said about other important Zionist politicians who lacked either a sufficient power base (Ahad Ha'am) or intellectual significance (H. Weizmann). The incorporation of V. Jabotinsky and D. Ben-Gurion into one auxiliary category is not, in my opinion, contrived and unjustified. They can be perceived as major antagonists within the context of Israeli politics (and its common interpretation of Jabotinsky). Nevertheless, their Zionist doctrine produces some similarity as well (in opposition to various intellectual trends associated with cultural Zionism or bi-nationalism).¹ The space devoted to each personality is quite uneven. About half of the whole article is devoted to V. Jabotinsky, the most controversial and at the same time the least documented figure of these three men. The section on Ben-Gurion uses, on the other side, a significant amount of compiled material with some observations which are not necessary original. I felt that much of the information was not sufficiently well known in the continental European milieu and had to be mentioned again in the context of the topic. The section on T. Herzl serves also as an introduction to the topic.

The author considered only a certain type of information relevant for the article itself. He tries to pay some attention to the legacy of T. Herzl (to the perception of Herzl by V. Jabotinsky and D. Ben-Gurion). The reflection of Herzlian (political) Zionism and its relation to their ideological viewpoints is also mentioned. Information on precedents for Zionist/Israeli political culture, such as their style of leadership, joint ideological standpoints, cults of personality and so on form the substance of the article. Data are mentioned in order to elucidate certain common features of Zionist politics and to offer some additional comparative material; the data are in no way exhaustive. The notoriously known facts (such as the clash between Jabotinsky and Ben-Gurion) are not dealt with.

T. HERZL AND THE STYLE OF ZIONIST LEADERSHIP

The political and ideological legacy of Theodor Herzl did not necessarily represent an inviolable dogma for the Zionist Organization. Though Herzl achieved the creation of Zionist Organization and its entrenchment in the arena of international politics, his above-mentioned brainchild did not fully correspond to the ideas held by Herzl himself.

Although Herzl ruled the ZO almost single-handedly, he did not establish a permanent faction of loyalists within it and his ideological influence largely

¹ Much deeper antagonism existed among masses of their followers. As the pact of 1934 (on normalization of relations) clearly demonstrates, their relationship was quite complex and both men cannot be perceived only as implacable enemies.

evaporated after his untimely death in 1904. Herzl's style of leadership was rather autocratic with his policy (including the diplomatic activity) known only to a small circle of his closest collaborators (mostly represented in the Inner Actions Committee). As a result, the loyalists, standing always in his shadow, were unable to fulfil the political vacuum in a satisfactory way and chose a compromise candidate in the form of David Wolffsohn.² Not surprisingly, the new president of the ZO did not resist the attacks coming from various ideological and geo-political sections of the movement for long. The days of Herzlian Zionism as a dominant political trend of the ZO were numbered in 1911 when Otto Warburg was elected president of the ZO.³

On the ideological level, Herzlian Zionism was neglected even prior to 1911. Herzl became a symbol to be interpreted according to the individual needs of particular groups. His concept of the Jews' State was largely abandoned. In spite of all that, Herzl was still perceived by the Zionists as an embodiment of a major turning point in modern Jewish history. Herzl embodied the innermost Zionist aspirations including notions of a normalization of relations with the Gentile nations, a change of patterns in regard to the Jewish people and last but not least an incorporation into the family of history forming nations. Herzl's Zionism (like Zionism in general) may not have succeeded in creating an original intellectual trend but it did succeed, despite its inherent utopian character, in transforming the Jews from an object of history into a historical subject. Herzl proposed precedents, to be followed or not, for Zionist politics, ideology and identity.

Herzl's perception of the institutions he himself created was quite ambivalent. Herzl intended to change the principle of functioning of Jewish politics itself. A politically and institutionally well-organized body, formally representing Jewry in international politics, should have replaced the activity of various philanthropic organizations (such as Alliance Israélite Universelle) and their policy of lobbying in favour of co-religionists throughout the world. The transparency of the movement was supposed to stand in direct contrast to their activities (combining the influence of leading Jewish oligarchs with public pressure such as in the case of the Damascus blood libel of 1840 for example). The contempo-

² Herzl's closest collaborator Max Nordau decided not to run for the post. While Herzl's un-Jewish worldview was well known (though often misrepresented) and tolerated, Nordau represented to a certain point an extremist on this issue. The mocking criticism of the sacred symbols of Jewish culture, such as the Bible, displayed in his literary activities, his non-Jewish wife and his baptized children raised in Lutheranism would probably represent an invincible obstacle even to the dominant secular sections within the movement. Herzl's son Hans was only thirteen years old at the time of his father's death and the candidacy was therefore out of the question.

³ One of Wolffsohn's main handicaps was his Jewish-Lithuanian origin. His "power base" was therefore limited to Lithuanian and South African (mostly of Lithuanian origin) Jewry and Wolffsohn had to face opposition from both the Russian and Polish Jews. On the development and composition of the central Zionist institutions in the period of 1905 – 1911 see Laqueur, W. *A History of Zionism*, London 1972, pp. 136 – 148.

rary Jewish institutions did not represent an ineffective political instrument only; from the perspective of Zionist efforts aimed at physical and moral restoration of the Jews, they represented an essentially detrimental aspect of the Jewish politics.

National institutions resembling those of other nations and built on similar modes of functioning represented a revolutionary change. Still, the original concepts Herzl proposed (prior to the first Zionist Congress of 1897) differed significantly from the form that evolved under his initiative later on.⁴

The Zionist Organization Herzl created had to avoid all the ills of its Zionist predecessors (such the Hibbat Tzion movement) in order to survive for a period longer than a few years. Unlike the Hibbat Tzion, its potential territorial influence was not limited to the confines of Tsarist Russia, a fact that made its functioning (including fundraising) much easier. First of all the newly created organization had to define its scope of activity. Herzl's pragmatic and charismatic leadership made inclusion of various mutually incoherent groups possible. It did inherit, however, some of the problems associated with the Hibbat Tzion era, namely the tension between the secular (cultural) and religious factions.

The alignment of a stable, disciplined (by Zionist standards) and fee-paying membership around the compromise formula of the Basle Programme represented Herzl's major victory that differentiated his effort from those of his predecessors. The vague formulation of the Basle Programme united several of the then existing Zionist trends into a single organization. The first article of the Basle Programme represented the approach of the so-called practical Zionism, advocating small-scale settlement projects in Palestine; the third article represented the ideas of cultural Zionists (though it did not incorporate all of their demands in order not to alienate the religious Zionists) and finally the fourth article represented the trend of political Zionism, advocating a direct political/diplomatic initiative in order to enhance the Zionist venture. Herzl was the first Jewish politician to succeed in establishing a permanent national political body (however marginal by its numerical size) behind him. He was also the first one to learn how to cope with this fractionized political entity representing his legacy for all the politicians to follow afterwards.

Although Herzl did offer several precedents for political leadership in the Zionist context, the cult of personality he enjoyed within the movement was almost unprecedented. It is quite bizarre that Herzl, himself with hardly any emo-

⁴ In principle, Herzl was a fierce opponent of the system of parliamentary (representative democracy). All of his concepts both in the pre-Zionist and Zionist periods as represented in various books and pamphlets (*Palais Bourbon*, so-called *Speech to the Rothschilds*, the *Jews' State*, *Altneuland*) show a preference for an undemocratic (though far from totalitarian) system. It is interesting to note that Herzl transferred some of his ideas, related to the issue of parliamentary democracy, from the pre-Zionist era into his Zionist vision almost unchanged. Herzl claimed, for example, that the form of government should stay in contrast to the form of state. Either the system of aristocratic republic or a system of democratic monarchy was to be perceived as the ideal one. Herzl, T. *The Complete Diaries of Theodor Herzl*. New York 1960, p. 147; Herzl, T. *Le Palais Bourbon*. Paris 1995, p. 265.

tional affection to Judaism, was able to arouse the deepest religious feelings with messianic associations. Herzl's own perception of the religious phenomenon cannot be detected properly as the material related to it is more than scarce. However, it is curious that Herzl, a keen and attentive reader otherwise, read the Bible for the first time in 1897 only after emphatic insistence of N. Sokolow.⁵ His perception of religion and its key notion (for the monotheistic cults at least) of God was rather vague. Herzl defined himself as a monist, comprehending God as something beyond reasoning; an ever-present, infinite, almighty will to good functioning like a muscle in the world.⁶ Still, he was personally convinced that science not religion served as the means of making people free.⁷

The Zionist Organization, in spite of its intention to become a national assembly in exile, did not have any methods of enforcing its decisions upon the membership at its disposal. Herzl intended to present his movement as a rational and humanistic one to the outside world, but his internal policy had to rely heavily on the irrational aspect as well (at least during the founding period).

During the short time Herzl led the Zionist movement several of his physical attributes became legendary, namely his "Assyrian" beard and "magical" hands. In reality his elegant bearing, oriental enough to make his counterparts curious and un-Jewish enough in order not to deter them, became part of the negotiation tactics (as is well-documented by all the major biographies). In the case of his first acquaintance in international politics, Grand Duke Friedrich I. of Baden, Herzl was advised to send his own photograph some time ahead of their meeting in order to assure his host he was physically different from the common perception of a Jew.⁸ In relation to the Jewish masses his acceptance as a dignified partner on the side of the non-Jews made a most favourable impression upon them.

The awakened messianic tendencies found their expression already prior to the creation of the Zionist Organization itself. The enthusiastic reception of Herzl at the Sofia railway station during his first visit to Istanbul clearly demonstrates this fact. The messianic-like ecstasy reached its climax when he travelled back to Vienna via Sofia. While he was supposed to deliver a speech in one local synagogue, a certain spontaneous anonymous outcry even suggested he was holier than the Ark of the Scroll when Herzl faced the dilemma whether he could turn back to it.⁹ Many of the questionable figures involved in the spread of messianic zeal were, quite surprisingly, Christian not Jewish religious digni-

⁵ Wenkert, J. *Herzl and Sokolow*. In: *Herzl Year Book*, vol. 2. New York 1959, p. 189. Though the relation of secular Zionists to tradition (rabbinic Judaism) was more than sceptical, sometimes even openly hostile (such as in the case of Syrkin or Berdyczewski), the Bible was mostly respected as an embodiment of the Hebrew spirit.

⁶ Herzl, T. *The Complete Diaries of Theodor Herzl*, p. 277.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

⁸ Stewart, D. *Theodor Herzl: Artist and Politician*. London 1974, p. 225.

⁹ Herzl, T. *The Complete Diaries of T. H.*, p. 402.

taries. The mass psychosis that erupted during Herzl's visit to the East End in 1898 was obviously incited by the well-known Zionist devotee rev. Hechler and a certain Farther Ignatius among others, as A. Bein accounts.¹⁰ The Zionist movement attracted many visionaries and lunatics at that time, but the interest of a number of Christian/Protestant figures in the Zionist venture was rather symbolic and marked the support later to come from the Protestant circles during the issuance of the Balfour Declaration. The first Zionist Congress in Basle in 1897 was one massive manifestation of the cult of personality with various types of messianic designations bestowed upon Herzl.

In relation to any future cults of personality to be practiced within the Zionist political culture, Herzl's behaviour could serve as precedent at least in one point. Although Herzl's preference for European over Jewish culture was such that he refuted any idea of incorporating even basic Jewish symbols into his vision, in the case of the personal cult he was obviously ready to tolerate them.¹¹ In other words, the Zionist political culture tolerated since its very inception the application of traditional symbols and designations even in the case of personalities with totally secular and agnostic worldviews. The cult of personality offered an additional scope for the outpouring of traditional (irrational) religious feelings that were not tolerated by themselves in the predominantly secular political culture of the Zionist movement.

Some of Herzl's critics displayed a tendency to compare him with various false messiahs, who frequently appeared in Jewish history. The most common was his comparison with Shabtai Tzvi. Herzl was introduced to his existence in 1896. According to J. Nedava, Herzl started to identify himself with this infamous hero shortly afterwards.¹² No matter what theatrical tendencies Herzl displayed (namely when presiding the congresses), it is quite obvious that Shabtai Tzvi was the only figure of Jewish history Herzl had any affection for. In the context of Zionist political culture even Herzl himself was willing to make an exception and bow to some symbols otherwise alien to him. Nevertheless, none of the other Zionist politicians was to enjoy the same cult of personality Herzl did.

JABOTINSKY'S PERCEPTION OF THE HERZLIAN-ZIONIST LEGACY

Though V. Jabotinsky was adopted as a cherished child of the Zionist movement for a short time (as a result of his imprisonment, an act totally unjust from the Zionist perspective, by the British authorities in 1920),¹³ he spent most of

¹⁰ Bein, A. *Theodore Herzl*. New York 1970, p. 281.

¹¹ Herzl's novel *Altneuland* serves as the best example of the above-mentioned statement. Several of the insensitive invectives against important Jewish symbols, such as Jerusalem, are also to be found in his Diaries.

¹² Nedava, J. *Herzl and Messianism*. In: *Herzl Year Book*, vol. 7. New York 1971, p. 13.

¹³ His popularity culminated in the summer of 1921 when he was elected to the Zionist Executive. The cooperation did not last long and Jabotinsky resigned from the office in 1923.

his political life in opposition to the established Zionist regime.¹⁴ Jabotinsky lived in a state of seclusion from the dominant Zionist politics, taking no part in the important decision-making process of the ZO as such. It is hardly surprising, then, that he had to look for some joint ideological attributes, with a commonly accepted Zionist leader, in order to diffuse his image of an ideological pariah illegitimate within the context of the Zionist ideology. Jabotinsky felt close both to Max Nordau and to Theodor Herzl. As a matter of course, it was the second Zionist personally Jabotinsky chose to associate his own ideas with and legitimize himself thereafter. It would not be correct, however, to interpret Jabotinsky's perception of Herzl as an artificial and somewhat belated product of his intricate political career. Though the focus of his interpretation shifted almost exclusively to the level of political concepts later on, the interpretation of Herzl, as an ideal Hebrew, existed already at the beginning of Jabotinsky's involvement in Zionist affairs.

Like most other Zionists, Jabotinsky interpreted Herzl's legacy according to his own particular needs with hardly any regard for his "master's" original intention or meaning. Though his interpretation was no doubt more grounded than other commonly used misinterpretations of that era (namely that of M. Buber),¹⁵ its disregard for the original form is no less striking and documents well some of the myths gradually entering the official Zionist historiography.

On the political level, Jabotinsky argued that only his interpretation of the final goal of Zionism was the one consistent with Herzl's Zionist vision. He accused the contemporary leadership of using so-called Trojan horse tactics by unveiling or denying the intention to establish Jewish majority in Palestine. Zionism could exist, in his opinion, only as a movement aiming to revive a "*Judenstaat*" (Jews' State).¹⁶ It had to be clear to everyone that the first and ultimate goal of Zionism was the establishment of a Jewish majority in Palestine. It was yet to be decided what form of autonomy the state should possess. Like Herzl before him, Jabotinsky did not insist on immediate national and political independence.¹⁷ Herzl's notion of a "*Judenstaat*" could be interpreted exclusively as an establishment of a state with a Jewish majority with any other notion, such as gradual transformation, repudiated.

¹⁴ It is important to note that his criticism was directed mainly against the Weizmannist leadership, with all its political overturns including the creation of the Jewish Agency, in the 1920's. The ideological clash with the Zionist Left was more characteristic for his intellectual evolution in the 1930's while at the beginning he criticized the Left mainly for its methods and tactics; not for its ideology. The creation of the Revisionist movement in 1925 was supposed to unite all the anti-Weizmann trends of that time, the Left included.

¹⁵ In Buber's perception the original Herzl and his own worldview became totally irrelevant. It was the potential of Herzl, as a symbol, that mattered. Herzl, the symbol, existed independently with no relevance to the reality as such and represented the driving force of the Zionist vision. Unlike Buber, Jabotinsky did respect at least some of his master's original ideas.

¹⁶ Jabotinsky uses the original German term in his Russian text.

¹⁷ Jabotinsky, V. Bolshinstvo (Majority). *Rassvet*, no 38/39, 21.10.1923.

Jabotinsky went further in his interpretation, however. He demanded the ZO stopped using the term "*national home*". The only legitimate terms to be used were either Jewish majority or an administrative and political self-government. Jabotinsky claimed that the term "*national home*" was nothing else than an invention of a hostile Mandatory administration. According to him it had no bases in the Balfour Declaration whatsoever.¹⁸

Needless to say, this particular claim was a total nonsense in itself.¹⁹ Still, it is no less interesting to note the difference existing with Herzl's approach. Herzl abandoned terminology implying any notion of statehood not long after the pamphlet *Der Judenstaat* was published in 1896. The obvious intention was to avoid any negative repercussions from the Ottomans. The term "*Judenstaat*" was replaced in the official Zionist vocabulary by a vaguer term "*Heimstätte*" (homestead). Being aware of this fact Jabotinsky claimed that the term "*Heimstätte*" was nothing else than a euphemistic term for the term "*Judenstaat*" – a state explicitly advocating the creation of a Jewish majority (possibly/preferably in Palestine) in other words.²⁰

The establishment of a Jewish majority was, no doubt, either the explicit or implicit ultimate goal shared by almost all the Zionist factions.²¹ Jabotinsky claimed, however, to follow in Herzl's footsteps by rejecting any diplomatic modification of the terminology by insisting upon explicit declaration of Zionist aspirations. It is not easy to guess what kind of a precedent for this policy Herzl could have offered (the vague and politically correct Basle Programme is a case in point). Jabotinsky, by sticking to this claim, helped to generate the image of a demonic Mandatory administration, which did not hesitate to falsify any of the decisions taken by the benign and enlighten British government in its own favour, among the Zionist public.²²

T. Herzl did not represent for Jabotinsky an inspiration in this limited field of terminological disputation only. The clash of terminology indicated much deeper political and ideological divisions within the Zionist movement. According to his own evaluation in the 1930s, the Zionist movement had existed since its inception in two distinct forms – the national and the humanitarian Zionism, each with a different set of priorities. Jabotinsky, like Herzl before him, supported the

¹⁸ Jabotinsky, V. Politicheskiye zadachi konferentsii (The Political Tasks of the Conference). *Rassvet*, no 16, 19.4.1925.

¹⁹ The text of the Balfour Declaration mentions the term "*national home*" explicitly.

²⁰ Jabotinsky, V. Politicheskiye zadachi konferentsii. *Rassvet*, no 16, 19.4.1925.

²¹ With the notorious exception of Brith Shalom group, of course. It was implied by Ahad Ha'am as well.

²² The same kind of demagoguery was employed by Jabotinsky in relation to the British decision to separate the area of Trans-Jordan from the territory of Mandatory Palestine. Although Jabotinsky, as a member of the Zionist Executive, sanctified the decision, he insisted upon the establishment of a state with a Jewish majority on both sides of the Jordan River till the end of his life.

trend of humanitarian Zionism. Its priority lay in an attempt to alleviate the material suffering of all Jews willing to change their plight. It was no less national in its aspiration to change the moral and cultural make-up of Jewry as well. The atmosphere of independent statehood might even result in an elimination of the physical and moral shortages acquired by the Jews in Diaspora.²³ Only the improvement of material conditions could bring about moral and spiritual improvement, however. Zionism was not supposed to be a small elite-club for the few chosen ones.²⁴ Neither language nor literature was the most important factor leading to national revival. It was the state and economy that mattered.²⁵ Political Zionism played, in his opinion, the same role that some of the self-imposed Jewish norms used to play before. The new era demanded a new aspect of self-imposed isolation (or national uniqueness and independence). After all the traditional forms, including the Jewish religion, had failed in fulfilling this role, political Zionism replaced them. This political trend as such had to look for a natural aspect of nationhood – national territory.²⁶

Jabotinsky's appraisal of the necessity to create suitable material conditions went hand in hand with his insistence on the creation of a Jewish majority in Palestine. As such, it did not clash with the tactics of the official Zionist leadership only; it represented a distinct alternative of cultural identity from that of the bi-nationalists. This idea did not appear in the last part of his hectic political career. Jabotinsky repeated his claims combining the issue of cultural identity with the issue of a Jewish majority already in the first half of the 1920s. It appears in the above-mentioned article "Majority". There can be no national cultural self-determination (identity) without a national territorial self-determination. Any attempts leading towards a solution based on Jewish minority/parity status in the country would result only in acculturation into the surrounding Arabic cultural milieu. The "genius loci" of Palestine as such had no influence upon the process whatsoever, as the case of the Sephardic community demonstrated.²⁷

It is interesting to note that like other major political Zionists (Herzl, Nordau) before him, Jabotinsky had a vision with a positive cultural content as well. As the above-mentioned ideas suggest, his vision, unlike the one of Herzl, does not stand in opposition to Ahad Ha'am and his concepts, but in opposition to his self-appointed interpreters, mostly associated with the Brith Shalom group.²⁸

²³ Jabotinsky, V. *Państwo Żydowskie* (The Jewish State). Warszawa 1937. pp. 20-22.

²⁴ The priority of improvement in material conditions dominates the ideas of the Marxist-Zionist thinker B. Borochov as well. Interestingly enough, the Zionist Left shared the scepticism of the established Zionist leadership in regard to the elementary 4th Aliya (1924-1928). Jabotinsky was one of the few Zionist politicians supporting, partly for his own political reasons, this Aliya which lacked almost entirely any Zionist identification in itself.

²⁵ Jabotinsky, V. *Państwo Żydowskie*, p. 28.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

²⁷ Jabotinsky, V. *Bolshinstvo. Rassvet*, No 38/39, 21.10.1923.

Considering how ardent a supporter of the Hebrew language Jabotinsky was, it is quite obvious that one of the essentials for the Herzl vs. Ahad Ha'am tension over the issue of cultural identity is missing.

Herzl's concept of Zionist cultural identity is embodied by the concept of the Jews' State (*Judenstaat*), which, by avoiding the adjective Jewish (*Juedischer Staat*), in its very name repudiates any notion of implementing particularistic Jewish norms and values, forcibly distilled and earmarked from European patterns. It is of some interest to note what term Jabotinsky uses in association with the future political entity.

Although the term as such could provide valuable information on the form of cultural identity ascribed by Jabotinsky to the state, it is necessary to add that the terminology used depends significantly on the original language of the articles in which it appeared. The term "Hebrew state", instead of "Jewish state", might seem to be quite logical within the context of the Hebrew translations.²⁹ Although Jabotinsky wrote in Hebrew fluently, the decisive majority of his articles were not written in this language (they were written in Russian, Yiddish, English and Polish instead).

In most of the articles, written originally in Russian, Jabotinsky uses the term *Judenstaat*, applying association with Herzl's concept of the Jews' state, therefore. As the Russian word *evrei* means both Jew and Hebrew, the whole issue of preference for the term Hebrew state starts to seem to be quite dubious, and even more so if one takes into account that in the above-mentioned pamphlet, *Państwo Żydowskie*, Jabotinsky applies explicitly the term Jewish state.³⁰ Jabotinsky uses, therefore, three different terms with three different connotations (in the context of proximity to Herzl's vision of Zionist identity) – the Jews' state, the Jewish state and the Hebrew state. It is consequently quite clear that Jabotinsky, as a native Russian speaker, saw no reason to differentiate between the terms Jewish and Hebrew state. Though he preferred the original term *Judenstaat*, he applied it as a political term rather than as a term associated with the new Zionist identity, as was Herzl's case. In this context the preference for the term Hebrew state (with its potential reference to some of the ideas advocated by the so-called Canaanite movement) seems to have very little foundation indeed.

Still, the somewhat dubious and artificial intellectual debate holds its validity in relation to Jabotinsky's perception of Herzl as an ideal of moral quality and

²⁸ For some of the details on his arguments with the Brith Shalom group see articles Vostok (The East) *Rassvet*, no 39, 26.9.1926, and Zhivopisnyi Vostok (Pictorial East) *Rassviet*, no 6, 7.2.1932.

²⁹ See for example Bilski Ben-Hur, Raphaella. *Every Individual, A King: The Social and Political Thought of Ze'ev Vladimir Jabotinsky*. Washington 1993. One cannot avoid the feeling, however, that some of the otherwise useful contributions to the topic, Bilski Ben-Hur among them, coming from the Hebrew language milieu suffer from their extensive reliance on the translations into Hebrew in general.

³⁰ Polish language does distinguish between Żyd (Jew) and Hebrajczyk (Hebrew).

leadership. Does he propose an alternative identity (a secular Zionist identity based on European rather than Jewish norms and values),³¹ as Herzl does, to the secular Jewish identity of *Ahad ha'am*?

The notion of Herzl as an archetype of the ideal Jew/Hebrew appeared in Jabotinsky's thought already in 1904. His evaluation of Herzl's personality, in the form of an essayistic eulogy-like article published that summer in the Russian-Jewish press, reveals several traces characterizing his interpretation of the major Zionist icon. It is quite obvious that even Jabotinsky himself could not avoid the temptation to grasp not only Herzl as he was, but mainly the living symbol he embodied. Herzl, the last exilarch of Israel, as Jabotinsky bombastically calls him, left too many discomposing views to his followers (embodied mostly in the novel *Altneuland*). This is one of the reasons why Jabotinsky recommends an appropriate foreword for the Russian edition of the book. Jabotinsky claims that Herzl did not intend to write a utopia, full realization of his own civic ideals in other words; he intended to demonstrate the possibility of creating a state.³² As a result, Herzl concentrated his efforts on elimination of any ideas offensive to either the conservatives on one side or the liberals on the other.

Altneuland is defined as a national challenge veiled in a series of vague ideas and hints with many concessions to the traditional/conservative sections. Herzl, as a leader of the nation, had to represent the ruling bourgeois class, its prevailing ideology included.³³ Not surprisingly, the real content of *Altneuland* is the exact opposite of Jabotinsky's evaluation – it is the boldest, most challenging and to certain point even the most detailed manifestation of Herzl's worldview.³⁴

More important than that, however, is the presence of some of the ideas, supposedly belonging to Herzl, which came to the forefront of Revisionist propaganda later on. Zionism or the Zionist Organization is not a party, but a national movement, substituting the state in the time of its non-existence. It welcomes anyone considering himself to be a Jew (in the national sense).³⁵ As such, the

³¹ The differences between the concepts of secular Jewish identity vs. secular Zionist identity are not limited to the sphere of cultural identity only; it bears several consequences in the sphere of politics as well. The secular national Jew absorbs various incentives from the spiritual centre (with a Jewish majority) in Palestine. He depends upon the existence of the spiritual centre as a source of his own Jewishness. Still, he can fully cultivate his secular Jewish identity in the Diaspora and does not have to move to Palestine himself. The Herzlian model, on the other side, contemplates absorption of all the Zionist-aware Jews into Palestine (non-Zionists would be free to assimilate through intermarriage into the prevailing surrounding) with the Diaspora liquidated.

³² Jabotinsky, V. *Gerzl: idealy, taktika, lichnost* (Herzl: Ideals, Tactics, Personality). In: *Evreiskaya zhizn*, no 4, August 1904, pp. 1-6.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

³⁴ Some of the ideas appeared in the so-called *Speech to the Rothschilds* (1895) already. The idea of several socially innovative projects, namely the cooperative economy, are not to be found in such a depth elsewhere.

³⁵ Jabotinsky, V. *Gerzl: idealy, taktika, lichnost*, p. 8.

movement contains all the factions and stands above them. The idea of a movement standing above the party politics and ideological divisions appeared again in the mid-1920's and was shared by leading Revisionist figures, such as J. Schechtman or M. Grossman for example.³⁶ The concept was based on the presumption that Revisionism, as a movement of state-Zionists, stood above the class or religious divergences (this fact entitled Revisionism, in Jabotinsky's eyes, to substitute the politicized ZO). Needless to say, the idea evaporated in the 1930s when the movement tried to obtain a more middle-class affirmative image.

As mentioned above, Jabotinsky perceived Herzl as an ideal of moral quality and leadership. In his perception there was no ambiguous type of the Jew³⁷ at that time. In his words, most of the contemporary Jews were only by-products of their surrounding ethnic and cultural milieus; there was no distinct type with certain easily distinguishable attributes. Only a negative type – a kike (*zhid*), as Jabotinsky puts it, existed. The only possible way to imagine such an ideal, is to perceive it as the literal opposite of the kike. Anything intimate to the kike is alien to the ideal type and vice versa. Not surprisingly, Herzl is the only one who could personify the ideal of the future to come. Herzl had all the physical and spiritual quantities enabling him to say *ivri anochi* (I am a Hebrew). What matters for Jabotinsky is the fact that he represented a sovereign and entire Hebrew in all its form. Not a single non-Hebrew aspect could be ascribed to him. He was the quintessence of the best Jewish life-sap. Herzl was a man able to drag the whole crowd behind him.³⁸ Herzl, the myth, appeared on the stage. In relation to Herzl's dispute with Ahad Ha'am it is important to note, that for Jabotinsky, the spiritual/cultural Zionism and Herzl were one.³⁹

Jabotinsky's perception of the role of a "leader" within the Zionist movement was twofold. He obviously considered the existence of a leader to be a necessity. Not surprisingly it was Jabotinsky himself who would play this role within the Revisionist faction. On the other side, he was the staunchest critic of the leadership cult prevailing in the ZO and even distanced himself on various occasions from the cult of his own personality cultivated by some sections of the Revisionist movement.

According to his opinion, the prevailing trend of the contemporary Zionist leadership had neither a program nor any kind of theoretical ideological structure. The contemporary ZO offered only the cult of leaders – wise, well versed in all problems and always knowing the right direction. Jabotinsky argued that the political culture suffered both from the influence of the contemporary Italian political model and from the stereotypes acquired in the Ghetto. Existence of a

³⁶ See Schechtman, J. *Puti Revizionizma* (The Course of Revisionism). *Rassvet*, no 52, 27.12.1925.

³⁷ Once again, it cannot be detected from the Russian text whether the proper translation is "Jew" or "Hebrew".

³⁸ Jabotinsky, V. *Gerzl: idealy, taktika, lichnost*, pp. 22-23.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

political platform, common in all civilized democracies, was obviously unknown to the current leadership. Jabotinsky claimed, in his own radical evaluation that the only political model to actually resemble the established Zionist leadership was that of Italian fascism. Like the official representatives of the ZO, it drew its strength from sterile slogans of nationalist bourgeois parties with no specific ideas or demands. A political platform was replaced by faith in the leaders.⁴⁰

Later on in his political career, Jabotinsky lamented on the quest for leadership (or for a dictatorship to be more exact) dominating politics throughout the civilized world. Still, one can discern two different approaches to the topic of leadership in the same article. Jabotinsky adheres to the liberal and democratic principles of the 19th century⁴¹ according to which not the individuals, but programs they represent should be elected. At the same time he claims that obedience to a true leader, such as Herzl, is not a matter of discipline, but something one feels to be natural.⁴² Jabotinsky submitted the idea (of a leader being one body and mind with his nation, with the nation representing one organic unity), which does not lack a certain totalitarian aspect, to the Revisionist public already in his novel *Samson* of 1927.

The ability to incorporate two mutually antagonistic perspectives into one hard-to-define model demonstrates well the intertwined existence of democratic ideas with an authoritarian style of leadership.

Jabotinsky's willingness to adopt democratic principles of leadership was put to a test in his relationship to the youth organization Betar.⁴³ Holding a title

⁴⁰ Jabotinsky, V. Fashisty sionizma (Zionist Fascists). *Rassviet*, no 51, 20.12.1925. Needless to say, accusations of fascist tendencies were a common feature of intra-Zionist disputes. (Jabotinsky called all the totalitarian tendencies com-fascism later on). Interestingly enough, it was Jabotinsky who came out first with the accusation. Besides, this accusation was directed against the Weizmann-led establishment and not against the Zionist Left. In spite of his insistence upon the clarity of a party platform, his own ideas did not have ambiguous and well-defined form, let alone a systematic structure. The status of Jabotinsky as a leader within his own movement did not always culminate in a party platform being drafted by him. The senior party apparatus (M. Grossman and J. Schechtman among others) played an equal role to the ideologues of Revisionism at the beginning of the movement at least. The economic part of the Revisionist programme (1925) was drafted by J. Schechtman and not by Jabotinsky. The ideas mentioned there did not correspond to the ideas shared by Jabotinsky at that time (he adopted most of them in the first half of the 1930's). See *Basic Principles of Revisionism*. London 1929, pp. 18-19.

⁴¹ It is not the topic of the current article to analyse Jabotinsky's concept of nationalism. One has to realize, however, that his adherence to "19th century liberalism" cannot be taken at a face value. What he comprehends by the term seems to resemble a set of liberal ideas incorporated into the idea of national liberation, not liberalism as a worldview. His manifested adherence to the principle of parliamentary democracy can be found, among others, in the article *My burzhoi* (We the Bourgeoisie). *Rassvet*, no 19, 15.5.1927.

⁴² Jabotinsky, V. Leader. *The Jewish Call*, no 10, vol. 2, October 1934.

⁴³ As Y. Shavit rightfully concludes, Betar had a common collective psychology not a common ideology. Shavit, Y. *Jabotinsky and the Revisionist Movement, 1925-1948*. London 1988, p. 20.

of its official leader (head of Betar), Jabotinsky did not have to compete over an ideological influence with other power bases (such as a senior party apparatus in case of the Revisionist movement), for some time at least. It is of some interest, therefore, to see how he described a leader to his attentive betarist audience. Like Herzl before him, Jabotinsky chose the form of a novel in order to reach the mass audience.

The novel *Samson*, with its literary quality mediocre even by Zionist standards, aimed to influence the undecided youth and offer it a pattern of a pseudo-mythic hero to be followed.⁴⁴ Although Jabotinsky was not yet ostracized at that time, as he was later on in his life, and his articles (on some topic at least) still demonstrated a certain amount of self-restraint, *Samson* does not fall into the same category. Expecting the distrust of youth for the established order, the novel not only smashes into pieces the content of the original biblical story, but represents also a challenge to the contemporary hierarchy of values within the Zionist political culture. It represents the most militaristic and undemocratic set of values ever to be found in his writings. Unlike later on in his career, when radical attacks on the Zionist establishment went hand-in-hand with attempts to pacify radical sections of his own movement, *Samson* is a story of deified leadership cult bathing itself in an aura of self-rightness. The Russian original of the novel demonstrates this fact even more explicitly than the English translations. The betarist credo is summoned-up by one of the youth in the novel, who declares: "*Samson is my lord. Only the one who does not do the unnecessary things is free. This is why a dog is the most free living being in the world.*"⁴⁵

One should not overestimate the betarist context, however. Though Jabotinsky submitted his most extremist viewpoint to the betarist milieu, he tried to pacify this audience later on. Jabotinsky, horrified by the fascist tendencies spreading among the Revisionist youth, came by the end of the 1930's with the concept of a minimalist state.⁴⁶ The concept represented the direct opposite of *Samson*. It advocated a semi-anarchic society in which the state was only a necessary evil with the purpose of its existence consisting exclusively of protecting individual freedom and liberty.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ On the context with Jabotinsky's other literary pieces see Stanislawski, M. *Zionism and the Fin de Siècle: Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism from Nordau to Jabotinsky*. Berkeley 2001.

⁴⁵ Jabotinsky, V. *Samson nazorei* (Samson the Nazorite). Odessa 2001, p. 201.

⁴⁶ The concept can be best found in two articles: 1.) Ha-sheela ha-havertit (The Social Issue). *Ha-Yarden*, no 5, 21.9.1938. (The original article was written in Yiddish; no English translation.) 2.) *On State and Social Problems*. In: Benari, I. (ed) *From the Pen of Jabotinsky*. Cape Town 1941, pp. 60-77. (Jabotinsky wrote the article, submitted to the Betarim, shortly before his death in 1940 while touring the U.S.A.)

⁴⁷ The concept of every individual as a king, so to speak, served as a title and thesis of the above-mentioned book by Dr. Bilski Ben-Hur. One cannot avoid the feeling that Jabotinsky's self-declared adhesion to liberalism is, sometimes, taken at face value, however. An interpre-

The cleavage between Jabotinsky's worldview and the political reality of the Revisionist movement/New Zionist Organization is striking. The accusations of adhering to fascism might seem to be unfounded if one takes into account the content of his writings (with the exception of *Samson*, of course) prior to the Katowice putsch in 1933. His own political manoeuvres (namely within the Revisionist movement) are of a quite different nature, however.

Though Jabotinsky shared the worldview of the moderate centrist-leaning party apparatus of the Revisionist movement, his concrete steps followed the opposite direction. The relationship started to deteriorate significantly from 1928, during his several-year Palestine sojourn, as he demonstrated "greater independency" from the legally elected institutions of the movement than was actually desirable. Jabotinsky emphatically rejected any fascist tendencies within the movement, advocated mostly by its Palestine section, and clashed verbally with its exponents (the Viennese Conference of the movement in 1932 clearly illustrates this fact).⁴⁸

Still, as the relationship with the apparatus worsened and culminated in his famous seizure of control over the whole organization, the so-called Katowice putsch, he could rely on nobody else but the extremist wing whose ideas he so much despised. Although Jabotinsky continued to "combat" the extremist elements, he started to resemble the role of Herzl, as a living symbol, interpreted freely by his followers according to their particular needs.⁴⁹

It seems that Jabotinsky, a brilliant orator, but a poor political strategist, was, like the moderate Revisionist leadership, engulfed by the very same "Betar shock wave" he himself initiated. Jabotinsky never succeeded in creating a viable political power base. Organizations he created showed heterodoxy, unique even by the Zionist standards,⁵⁰ did produced hardly any significant financial resources for the planned political offensive, and last but not least the Revisionist masses worshipped a somewhat mythical image of Jabotinsky that had very little in common with the actual leader.⁵¹ Jabotinsky started to resemble Herzl and his legacy in the least desirable aspect.

tation considering the concept of minimalist state to be the basis of Jabotinsky's socio-political thought is, in my humble opinion, quite farfetched. Unlike the idea of individual liberty, the idea of limited state authority appeared late in his life and cannot, I suppose, be taken out of context from the inner-Betar discourse (reaction to its shift to the radical right in the late 1930s) and the accusations of proximity to the model of Italian fascism (concept of national arbitration) in general. Jabotinsky tried to demonstrate the belittled role of the state for his thought, in order, among other reasons, to defuse these accusations. Even his relation to individual freedom differed sometimes, according to the particular needs of audience and circumstances.

⁴⁸ Jabotinsky did not repudiate only the external form but the very content of their visions.

⁴⁹ See also his article O maximalizme (About Maximalist Tendencies). *Gadegol*, no 6, 17.3.1935.

⁵⁰ To be more exact, the Revisionist movement, unlike the various alliances of the Left, evolved from a unified movement into an incoherent one.

DAVID BEN-GURION – HERZL AS A PRECEDENT FOR THE POLITICS OF “MAMLACHTIUT”

Needless to say, Ben-Gurion's position within the Zionist movement differs in all aspects from the above-mentioned Zionist figures. Coming from the ideological trend banning its members to collaborate with the bourgeois Zionists until 1926, Ben-Gurion had to laboriously struggle to overcome the existing ideological differences in order to gain control over the Zionist movement. The steady path of ideological compromise combined with skilful attempts aimed at assimilation of the Zionist movement to his mother party, Mapai, led to the creation of a power base with real authority over a variety of spheres, a power base unparalleled in Israeli history. Although Ben-Gurion did not have the status of an ideologue within the dominant Zionist Left (Y. Ben-Zvi and Y. Tabenkin held such a position),⁵² neither did he play the role of a behind-the-scenes inspiring guru, as B. Katznelson did, Ben-Gurion, embodying the party apparatus, displayed an ability of thoughtful reflection and definitely did not consider himself to be an intellectual pariah. In spite of lacking imagination, Ben-Gurion, as an avid bibliophile and prolific writer, did succeed in changing at least some aspects of his image, but only after grasping the reigns of power.⁵³

⁵¹ Jabotinsky's political organ *Rassvet* is a case in point. The weekly journal appeared till 1934. The articles, written in Russian, could reach only a very limited audience of émigrés, while the Revisionist masses, with their stronghold in Poland, had no access to the original form of his ideas presented there.

Some interesting material on the absence of centralized organization can be found in the book by Dr. L. Weinbaum on the relation between the NZO and the Polish authorities. It seems, in his opinion, that Jabotinsky was not involved in the arms purchases for Etzel. Besides, the Polish authorities had a far greater control (even in Palestine) over the activities of Etzel. See the section on military aid – Weinbaum, L. *A Marriage of Convenience: The New Zionist Organisation and the Polish Government, 1936-1939*. New York 1993, pp. 123-164. It is quite obvious that Jabotinsky played the role of a supreme leader of Betar rather in theory.

⁵² As notoriously known, Tabenkin held this position within the dominant Zionist Left only till the secession of his faction from Mapai in 1944.

⁵³ It is curious to note that major differences between the Revisionists and the dominant trend of Socialist Zionism, affecting their way of functioning, existed in the very structure and composition of the particular groups. Although the socialist trends attracted many intellectuals, the composition of party cadres did not fully reflect this fact. The Revisionist leadership, on the other side, consisted mostly of intellectuals, while the mass of its followers had a distinctly plebeian character. See Shapiro, Y. *The Formative Years of the Israeli Labour Party: The Organisation of Power, 1919-1930*. London 1976. According to the data mentioned in the book (p. 268), between 75-82% of political activists associated with Ahdut ha-Avodah in the years 1923-1929 attended no school of higher education. See also Shavit, Y. *Jabotinsky and the Revisionist Movement, 1925-1948*. The inability of the Revisionists to create an economic and political power base in Palestine, parallel to the one dominated by Mapai, led to their diminished importance in the country. See Horowitz, D. & Lissak, M. *Origins of the Israeli Polity: Palestine under the Mandate*. Chicago 1977.

Ben-Gurion's relation to the political legacy left by T. Herzl was quite warm as well, which might seem a bit bizarre considering Ben-Gurion's Poalei Tzion background, dominated by the rigid Marxist-Zionist borochovist doctrine, but it has certain undeniable logic in the light of Ben-Gurion's subsequent attachment to the importance of state and security (to the "state-forming Zionism" in other words). Besides, Herzl's sensitivity to the social issues combined with his charisma for the Zionist public (belonging to various factions) in general made him acceptable for at least the moderate sections of the Zionist left.

As Sh. Teveth suggests, Ben-Gurion identified with Herzl early on in his life. As soon as he heard the news about a fabulous pamphlet, named *Der Judenstaat*, yet another ardent follower joined Herzl's cause. The affection felt for Herzl was so strong, he even considered himself destined to be his alter ego.⁵⁴

It is of some interest to observe Ben-Gurion's perception of Herzl, when confronted with the official Zionist interpretation. It does not lack, of course, certain official traits. The foundation of an independent state made the transfer of Herzl's remains from foreign land possible. Herzl and Biblical Joseph were the only Jews their nation found necessary to honour in this way immediately after returning to the soil of Eretz Yisrael.⁵⁵ As is well known, the notion of Herzl's Palestine-centric Zionist orientation is quite contrived and finds very little support in his own writings. Besides, it is debatable whether the cosmopolitan and multicultural environment of Vienna can be defined, if compared with Ben-Gurion's Hebraized socialist republic, as foreign and estranged for Herzl himself.

Ben-Gurion's perception is not limited to the official image, however. It combines the official image with an original interpretation particular to Ben-Gurion himself. Ben-Gurion claimed that Herzl only empowered an old vision with a new vigour and thus launched a new era. This skill was the source of Herzl's greatness. "*An old idea flared up his heart and by the strength of his faith, personal charisma and mighty deeds turned itself into a new one... straitening up, organizing and unifying the nation, transforming it into a political force, an international factor – an idea created reality.*"⁵⁶

Herzl represented, in this perspective, an ideologue of Ben-Gurion's political trend/concept, defined by him as *mamlachtiut*.⁵⁷ One cannot deny, however,

⁵⁴ Teveth, Sh. *Ben-Gurion: The Burning Ground, 1886-1948*. Boston 1987, p. 9.

⁵⁵ Ben-Gurion, D. *Haalah etzmot T. Herzl* (Transfer of T. Herzl's Remains). In: *Hazon va-derech* (Vision and the Path), vol. 1. Tel Aviv 1951, p. 247.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 248.

⁵⁷ The term is usually translated as "statism". The state-controlled economy represents only one characteristic feature of the concept, however. The traditional *haluziut* (pioneering spirit), personal and groups interests subordinated to the state and the overall preference for state-forming values are additional dimensions of the term. I suggest, therefore, translating the term as "state-formism", which does not sound well to the ears of a native English speaker, but translates the original meaning in all its complexity. See also section on Ben-Gurion in Avineri, Sh. *The Making of Modern Zionism: The Intellectual Origins of the Jewish State*. New York 1981.

that the concept of *mamlachtiut* shared several similar features with political Zionism itself (both Herzlian and Jabotinsky's) and the evaluation of Ben-Gurion is not totally unjustified or incorrect. The stress upon a unified cohesive political action, denying the validity of irrelevant partisan interests (political, ideological or religious) is common to the whole trend of "state-forming Zionism" and distinguishes it from any trends insisting upon the priority of identity-related issues (such as was the case of cultural or religious Zionism).⁵⁸

Herzl, perceived by Ben-Gurion, was an excellent political strategist able to organize Jewry and thus able to change reality by political action. The stress upon the erection of a political institution/power base characterize Ben-Gurion's own set of values, but, at the same time, expresses well the importance of Herzl in Zionist/Israeli history. It was Herzl, the politician and diplomat, who changed the course of modern Jewish history and not Herzl, the symbol or the archetype of an ideal Jew. While Jabotinsky tried to discern an ideological proximity to Herzl, Ben-Gurion was satisfied with the tangible reality and precedents of political culture.

Interestingly enough, Ben-Gurion recalls a shechinah (Divine presence) flying high above Herzl's head when he was writing the famous pamphlet.⁵⁹ Disregarding the fact it was Wagner's opera *Tannhäuser*, which offered an immediate source of inspiration for the pamphlet composing Herzl, Ben-Gurion was willing to incorporate some aspects of Judaism, deprived of their original theist content and theological form, into the corpus of civil religion offered by the *mamlachtiut* era. It is interesting to note that some of the messianic tendencies reappeared at the peak of the statism era in the 1950s. Although the Labour Zionist movement boycotted any traditional feasts (including Yom Kippur) and symbols in the beginning, the cult of its leader, Ben-Gurion, started a process of revaluation. Not surprisingly Herzl was the newly re-discovered mythical hero of the *mamlachtiut* era. The messianic honours belonged to Ben-Gurion, however. According to Ch. Liebman and Don-Yehiya, the adulation of Ben-Gurion grew to extreme forms (messianic ceremony) in the presence of new immigrants. They kissed soles of his feet, touched his clothing and brought sick children so he might heal them.⁶⁰ It seems likely that the precedent for messianic like honours offered to Herzl made absorption of these extreme forms into the context of civil religion more feasible.

It is appropriate to quote Sh. Teveth once again. Ben-Gurion actually combined attributes of two historical figures in his concept of a leader. Herzl was not

⁵⁸ The "state-forming Zionism" does not deny the validity of the identity related issues altogether. As was the case of Herzlian Zionism, it offers a positive identity of its own. The existence of suitable material conditions and political institutions represents for the trend a *sine qua non* condition of first-rate priority not necessarily the ultimate value (for Herzl and Jabotinsky at least).

⁵⁹ Ben-Gurion, D. *Haalah etzmot T. Herzl*, p. 248.

⁶⁰ Liebman, Ch., Don-Yehiya E. *Civil Religion in Israel: Traditional Judaism and Political Culture in the Jewish State*. Berkeley 1983, pp. 94-98.

the only personality in history with astonishing leadership skills; Lenin suited the category as well. Both men were dedicated to their cause and capable of a pragmatic political manoeuvre at the same time.⁶¹ Charisma without an appropriate political cunning and firm power base was totally useless in his perspective. The pragmatism, embodied in his controlled activism, and ability to modify the rigid Marxist-Zionist doctrine in order to gain control and dominance within the Zionist movement enabled Ben-Gurion to grasp unprecedented power and influence.

There are several possible ways of interpretation related to Ben-Gurion's political career. The common perception – Ben-Gurion the state-builder, father of the nation, for whom the nationalist aspect is far more important than any socialist ideals or values is also supported by the official interpretations of *Ben-Gurion*.

An alternative interpretation, based on the precept of self-defeating erosion of traditional socialist values from Ben-Gurion's vocabulary, considers the question of socialist awareness to play a far greater role than the interpretation mentioned above.⁶²

Still, the question of why this process can be attributed to Ben-Gurion, among all the Socialist Zionists, in particular is left largely unanswered. One should not forget that the history of his political career is, at the same time, a history of fascinating power build-up. When Ben-Gurion arrived in Palestine in 1906, his mother party of ca. 60 members (local Palestine branch of Poalei Tzion) represented an uncrowned pariah among the Zionist parties. Ben-Gurion succeeded in thirty years time (by 1935) in creating a formidable politico-economic power base, with additional military capacity, and elimination (though not physical) of all his rivals and opponents no matter whether they recruited themselves from his own party, the Zionist Left or the Zionist movement in general. The small cell of his comrades, which infiltrated the Zionist Organization in order to gain access to otherwise inaccessible financial resources,⁶³ gained control over the whole organization they once boycotted. Only the joined image of Herzl and Lenin could probably serve as a pattern for such an exemplary political leadership.

CONCLUSION

In spite of innumerable differences existing among the three above-mentioned Zionist politicians, the complex reality of their political careers and ideological standpoints does show some similarities as well. T. Herzl represented for V. Jabotinsky and D. Ben-Gurion more than just an official Zionist icon to be

⁶¹ Teveth, Sh. *Ben-Gurion: The Burning Ground, 1886-1948*, pp. 233-235.

⁶² See Cohen, M. *Zion and State: Nation, Class and the Shaping of Modern Israel*. New York 1992.

⁶³ The Revisionists visibly failed to understand this simple wisdom of alliance with the Weizmann-led ZO.

occasionally revered. Jabotinsky tried to find out some joint ideological aspects while Ben-Gurion discovered prefiguration of his own pragmatic leadership in Herzl. Both men were, however, able to grasp the decisive importance of Herzl's political legacy. His stress upon the material aspect of the Zionist venture found suitable response from both men enabling their visions, with particular state-forming emphasis of their own, to follow up an already existing precedent in Zionist political culture. Although the clash that evolved between Jabotinsky and Ben-Gurion sidelined some of their common aspects (both men belonged to the activist trend of Zionist politics),⁶⁴ the emphases on the continuous state-building process, with partial interest suppressed, (as embodied in Jabotinsky's concept of *monism* and Ben-Gurion's concept of *mamlachtiut*)⁶⁵ turns both of them, at least partially, into ideological successors of Herzl's politically organized Zionism.

All three Zionist personalities demonstrated a heterodox mixture of democratic and undemocratic tendencies throughout their political careers. Needless to say, democracy as such, did not represent the ultimate aim of Zionism for any one of them. The common features offer an additional outlet of discourse. Why should Jabotinsky be interpreted almost exclusively within the context of European radical right, when the Zionist milieu recognized a precedent for a leadership cult of its own?⁶⁶

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⁶⁴ Designation of Jabotinsky as an extremist needs to be treated with caution. Jabotinsky continued to advocate cooperation with the British at a time, when even the moderates within the Revisionist movement repudiated it. He was the only major Zionist politician to propose the idea of a wide ranging collective national autonomy for the Arab minority in the future state. See his articles *Etika zheleznoi steny* (The Ethics of the Iron Wall). *Rassviet*, no 44/45, 11.11.1923 and *O dvunatzionalnoi Palestine* (About the Bi-national Palestine). *Rassviet*, no 1, 3.1.1926; no 41, 16.10.1927. The secondary sources, especially those coming from the Israeli milieu, often fail to distinguish between Jabotinsky, the myth, and Jabotinsky, the real person. Both M. Begin and D. Ben-Gurion have taken full advantage of the myth in order to enhance their own stature. It is quite debatable, however, why the mythical dimensions of Jabotinsky should replace the reality in academic discourse.

⁶⁵ Jabotinsky's *monism* was directed against, among others, dual loyalty of the Zionist Left, while *mamlachtiut* denied, among others, the legitimacy of the partisan interest of the Zionist right.

⁶⁶ For the comparison with the radical right see Shapiro, Y. *The Road to Power: Herut Party in Israel*. New York 1991, pp. 9-42. A thesis suggesting influence of the Polish radical right on Betar is very convincing in itself. It is rather questionable, however, whether similar influences can be ascribed to Jabotinsky, for whom the Polish milieu did not represent the same immediate surrounding.

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