Roots of Labor Zionism: Israel as the New Land of Socialist Ideas?

Ayşe Ömür ATMACA*

Abstract

Labor Zionism, which dominated the politics and organizational structure of the Jewish community in Palestine during the pre-state period, became the main component of the founding ideology of the State of Israel. Most members of the Second and the Third *Aliyah*s were affected by socialism in the sense that they believed the realization of a just society could only be achieved through the idea of equality. The idea of the emancipation of Jews with the help of the Jewish socialist state was one of the most significant motivations for the independence. In this period, the pioneers of Labor Zionism, who were also the founding fathers of the State of Israel, separated Jewish from Arab economy, and established institutions and political parties that are still influential today. This article aimed to investigate the socialist roots of Zionism, especially before the independence of the State of Israel in 1948. From a constructivist point of view, in this study Zionism is defined as the ideology providing the people of the nation-state with a feeling of belonging. It is argued that the idea of socialism was the most important part of national identity and of Jewish nationalism especially during the pre-state period. The economic and political institutions founded by the pioneers of the Second and Third *Aliyahs* helped create both a unified Jewish economy and a basis for political life in Israel. While Labor Zionism was dominant after independence until the 1970s, many of the ideas of the early Labor Zionists have not been realized. The socialist ideals that had been the symbol of the new society lost their political influence after the Six-Day War of 1967 and were replaced with Revisionist Zionism.

Keywords: Zionism, Socialist Zionism, *Aliyah*, Jewish Labor, Palestine, Israeli Politics.

İşçi Siyonizminin Kökenleri: Sosyalist Düşüncelerin Yeni Ülkesi olarak İsrail?

Özet

Filistin'de devlet öncesi dönemde Yahudi toplumunun siyasetine ve örgütsel yapısına egemen olan İşçi Siyonizmi İsrail Devleti'nin kuruluş ideolojisinin temel parçası haline gelmiştir. İkinci ve Üçüncü *Aliya*ların pek çok üyesi, adil bir toplumun gerçekleştirilmesinin yalnızca eşitlik düşüncesi ile başarılabileceğine olan inançları doğrultusunda, sosyalizmden etkilenmiştir. Yahudilerin Yahudi bir sosyalist devlet yardımıyla özgürleşmesi düşüncesi bağımsızlık için en belirgin motivasyonlardan biri olmuştur. Bu dönemde, aynı zamanda İsrail Devleti'nin kurucuları olan İşçi Siyonizminin öncüleri Yahudi ekonomisini Arap ekonomisinden ayırmışlar ve günümüzde hala etkili olan kurumlar ve siyasi partiler kurmuşlardır. Bu makale Siyonizmin özellikle İsrail Devleti'nin 1948'de bağımsız olmasından önce sosyalist kökenlerini incelemektedir. İnşacı bakış açısıyla bu makalede Siyonizm bir aidiyet duygusu ile ulus-devlet halkı sunan bir ideoloji olarak tanımlanmıştır. Çalışmada sosyalist düşüncenin özellikle devlet öncesi dönemde ulusal kimlik ve Yahudi milliyetçiliğinin en önemli parçası olduğu ileri sürülmektedir. İkinci ve Üçüncü *Aliya*ların liderleri tarafından kurulan iktisadi ve siyasi kurumlar hem birleşik Yahudi ekonomisinin hem de İsrail'in siyasi hayatının temellerinin atılmasına yardımcı olmuştur. İşçi Siyonizmi bağımsızlıktan sonra 1970'lere kadar etkin olsa da ilk İşçi Siyonistlerin fikirlerinin çoğu gerçekleştirilememiştir. Yeni toplumun sembolü olan sosyalist düşünceler 1967 Altı Gün Savaşları sonrasında siyasi etkisini kaybetmiş ve yerini Revizyonist Siyonizme bırakmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Siyonizm, İşçi Siyonizmi, *Aliya*, Yahudi İşçi, Filistin, İsrail Siyaseti.

أصول الصهيونية العمالية : اسرائيل كـوطن جديد للأفكار الاشتراكية

عائشة اومور اتماجا

خلاصة :

ان الصهيونية العمالية التي كانت مسيطرة على سياسة المجتمع اليهودي وهيكليته التنظيمية، اضحت بعد قيام دولة اسرائيل جزءا اساسيا من ايديولوجية تأسيس الدولة. ان عددا كبيرا من اعضاء الجمعيات التعاونية الزراعية (Aliya) الثانية والثالثة، كانوا يؤمنون بالمبدأ المتمثل في ان تحقيق مجتمع عادل لا يمكن ان يتم الا بفكرة المساواة، متأثرين في ذلك بالافكار الصهيونية. واضحت فكرة تحرر اليهود بمساعدة من دولة اشتراكية أحد اكبر الدوافع لتحقيق الاستقلال. وفي هذه الفترة فان رواد الصهيونية العمالية الذين كانوا في نفس الوقت من مؤسسي دولة اسرائيل، قاموا بفصل الاقتصاد اليهودي عن الاقتصاد العربي وأسسوا مؤسسات واحزاب سياسية لا تزال فاعلة حتى يومنا هذا.

تولى هذا المقال دراسة وتحليل الاصول الاشتراكية للصهيونية للفترة التي سبقت قيام دولة اسرائيل المستقلة عام ١٩٤٨. ويعرّف المقال الصهيونية بنظرة واقعية على انها عقيدة تعرض دولة شعب يحس بالتبعية او العائدية الي هذا الشعب. ويبين المقال ان الفكر الاشتراكي – وبالاخص في الفترة التي سبقت قيام الدولة – هو جزء مهم من الهوية الوطنية والقومية اليهودية.

ان المؤسسات الاقتصادية والسياسية المقامة من قبل (Aliya) الثاني والثالث، قد ساعدت على إرساء أسس الاقتصاد اليهودي المتحد وأسس الحياة السياسية لإسرائيل. ومع ان الصهيونية العمالية استمرت على تأثيرها وفاعليتها بعد الاستقلال ولغاية السبعينات من القرن الماضي، فانه لم يتم تحقيق غالبية افكار الصهيونية العمالية. ان الافكار الاشتراكية التي اضحت شعارا للمجتمع الجديد فقدت تأثيرها السياسي بعد حرب الأيام الستة لعام ١٩٦٧ وتركت موقعها للصهيونية الاصلاحية.

الكلمات الدالة : الصهيونية، الصهيونية العمالية، Aliya ، العمال اليهود، فلسطين، سياسة اسرائيل.

Introduction

Israel is an immigrant state. Since the end of the 19th century, large-scale immigration, called *Aliyah*, has come to the region. Indeed, the world's major international migration movements have primarily been the result of either economic or political/cultural/religious pressures.[1]

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[1]   Stephen Castles, "International Migration at the Beginning of the Twenty-First Century: Global Trends and Issues", *International Social Science Journal*, Volume 52, Issue 165, September 2000, pp.271-273.

Yet the Israeli example is unique because, while these factors have been relevant for the immigrants to some degree, especially during the late 19th century, with the emergence of Political Zionism, ideology has become the main driving force for immigration to the land of Palestine.

It is hard to call Zionism a monolithic ideological movement. It incorporates ideologies, such as socialism, nationalism and liberalism, as well as various religious stances. Socialist Zionism/Labor Zionism as a political movement formed during the Second and the Third *Aliyahs*: it became the main ideological backbone of the country before and after independence; it was behind the creation of the myths, symbols and discourse of the new secular Jewish community. It also informed many of the key institutions established by the State of Israel that shaped the democratic structure of the country, such as the *Poale Zion* (Workers of Zion) and *Hapoel HaTzair* (Young Worker). These groups founded the *Mapai*, or Workers' Party of the Land of Israel, in 1930.[2]

While Labor Zionism was dominant after independence until the 1970s, many of the ideas of the early Labor Zionists have not been realized. Moreover, Labor Zionism has become marginal in Israeli political and cultural life today, having been replaced mainly by right-wing/religious Zionists and the Likud party.

This article is an attempt to investigate the socialist roots of Zionism, especially before the independence of the State of Israel in 1948. In the first part of this study the term Zionism as a founding ideology of Israel and its coercive role in immigration will be discussed briefly. In the second part of the study the major immigration waves to Israel, or *Aliyahs*, between 1882 and 1948 will be examined, along with their significant characteristics. The study will then shift focus to explore the roots of the socialist elements of Zionism that emerged during and after the Second *Aliyah*. The ideological stances of Labor Zionism, and the institutions and political parties it fostered will be the focus of the subsequent section. It will be argued that socialist discourse became the most important component of Jewish national identity and nationalism before the independence of the State of Israel. Furthermore, the economic and political institutions founded by the pioneers of the Second and Third *Aliyahs* helped create both a unified Jewish economy and a basis for political life in Israel. The article will close with a summary and concluding ideas.

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2   James L. Gelvin, *The Israel-Palestine Conflict: One Hundred Years of War*, (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p.68.

Zionism, Labor Zionism and *Aliyahs* during the Pre-state Period

Constructivism as social science theory emphasizes that before the establishment of a state; the nation is created as "an imagined community—imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign."[3] Accordingly, nation-states extending from these imagined communities perceive themselves as sharing certain attributes, and state-building policies are designed around strengthening the feeling of nationhood.[4] Both the nation and the state are influenced by nationalism as an ideology that aims "to create a territorially bounded political unit, a state, out of a homogeneous cultural community, a nation."[5]

From this perspective, if we accept Danforth's arguments, which understand the nation-state of Israel as a culturally homogeneous social group[6], we should add that Zionism is the ideology providing the people of the nation-state with a feeling of belonging. Therefore, in order to discuss the socialist blueprint of the State of Israel, we should first define Zionism.

Zionism

"Zion" is one of the Hebrew Bible's names for Jerusalem. "Zionism" was coined in 1891 by Nathan Birnbaum and initially used to refer to a new ideology within which Jews were perceived as a sovereign nation that should have a single homeland, Eretz Yisrael/Palestine.[7] According to Zemlinskaya, Zionists at the time aimed both to legitimize the idea of the formation of a Jewish state in the region and to unite all Jews in the world toward fulfilling this aim.[8] In order to realize these goals the Zionist movement needed immigrants to come to Israel.

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3   Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread o Nationalism*, (London: Verso, 1991), p.6.

4   Will Kymlicka and Christine Straehle, "Cosmopolitanism, Nation-States, and Minority Nationalism: A Critical Review of Recent Literature", *European Journal of Philosophy*, Volume 7, Issue 1, April 1999, p.73.

5   Loring M. Danforth, *The Macedonian Conflict: Ethnic Nationalism in a Transnational World*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995), p.14.

6   ibid., p.14.

7   David Engel, *Zionism*, (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2009), p.1.

8   Yulia Zemlinskaya, "Between Militarism and Pacifism: Conscientious Objection and Draft Resistance in Israel", *Central European Journal of International and Security Studies*, Volume 2, Issue 1, 2008, p.17.

It has been argued that "Zionism" is not a monolithic ideological movement. Zionists were influenced by many ideologies over many eras, including socialism, Marxism, nationalism and liberalism. Political Zionism, Socialist/Labor Zionism, Religious Zionism, Revisionist Zionism and Cultural Zionism are examples of this diversity.

Labor Zionism is accepted as the most influential movement in the Zionist organizational structure. It differentiated itself from "Political Zionism" during the 1930s especially with the impact of the leading socialist figures of the Second *Aliyah* to the Palestinian territory under the British Mandate. Political Zionism, founded by Theodor Herzl and Chaim Weizmann, underlined that a Jewish state would be founded through the efforts of the international community.[9] In contrast, the pioneers of the Labor Zionism espoused the idea that only the Jewish working class in the Land of Israel could create a Jewish state with rural *kibbutzim*[10] and *moshavim*[11] and an urban Jewish proletariat. Gelvin asserts, however, that these ideas were not based on the class conflict; instead, Labor Zionists defended egalitarianism with no private ownership.[12]

Labor Zionism influenced not only the ideas and policies of the founding fathers of the State of Israel but the major institutions of the country upon its establishment. For example, *HaShomer*, the predecessor of *Haganah*, which was the core of the IDF (Israel Defense Forces), was established as a Labor Zionist institution during the pre-state period. Additionally, Labor Zionists played an important role in the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, and dominated Israeli politics until the end of the 1970s. Moses Hess, Dov Ber Borochov, Aaron David Gordon, David Ben-Gurion, Nachman Syrkin, Golda Meir and Berl Katznelson were the movement's ideological and political founders. In order to better understand the ideological roots of the State of Israel we have to examine *Aliyahs*, their pioneers and their ideologies before state independence.

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9   William Foxwell Albright, et al., *Palestine: A Study of Jewish, Arab and British Policies*, Esco Foundation, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1947), Volume 1, p.43.

10   *Kibbutzim* (sing. *Kibbutz*) are collective communities based on agriculture established by the Labor Zionists.

11   *Moshavim* (sing. *Moshav*) are cooperative agricultural communities of individual farms established by the Labor Zionists during the Second Aliyah.

12   James L. Gelvin, *The Israel-Palestine Conflict,* p.67.

Aliyah

The term *Aliyah* is a Hebrew word meaning "ascent." During the nineteenth century, particularly in Eastern Europe, leading Jewish intellectual and political figures began to consider the possibility of and ways to pursue national unity among Jews. The "Return to Zion" movement, which tried to liberate Jews from pogroms, was one outcome of these deliberations.[13] Under these circumstances the term *Aliyah*, which came to be one of the most important components of Zionist ideology, began to be used to refer to the voluntary, ideological and forced migration of Jews to Palestine.

It can be said that the various migration waves that brought Jews around the world to Palestine in different periods had distinctive characteristics with respect to geographical origins, reasons and ideologies. Immigration to Palestine began after the Jews' expulsion from Spain in 1492.[14] In the 16th century, large numbers of Jews arrived in the region, resulting in the northern city of Safed becoming the center of Kabbalah, Jewish mysticism. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Orthodox Jews settled in the four Holy Cities of the Land of Israel: Jerusalem, Hebron, Safed and Tiberias and established the "Old Yishuv,"[15] whose numbers increased to 25,000 in the 1880s.[16] It should be added that at the beginning of the movement, the members of this community did not support Zionist principles because they believed this new secular movement should not attempt to establish a Jewish state before the appearance of the Messiah.

After these immigration waves, which were mainly religiously motivated in reaction to European anti-Semitism and nationalist and socialist ideas, Jews, especially from Russia and Eastern Europe, began to immigrate to Palestine. These immigrants established new forms of settlement, called the "New Yishuv,"[17] and created the key political, social

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13   Nina Toren, "Return to Zion: Characteristics and Motivations of Returning Emigrants", *Social Forces*, Volume 54, No. 3, March 1976, pp.546-558.

14   Mark Tessler, *A History of Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), p.23.

15   The Old Yishuv refers to the Jewish community that lived in the Land of Israel /Palestine before the Zionist *Aliyahs*.

16   Bernard Reich, *A Brief History of Israel*, (New York, Facts on File Inc., 2008),p.13.

17   The New Yishuv refers to the Jewish community that came to the Land of Israel/Palestine with the immigration waves of the Zionist *Aliyahs* until the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948.

and economic institutions of the State of Israel. Contemporary Israel's ideological, institutional and social roots were developed during this pre-state era. The data in the following table provide information about the various immigration waves to Israel.

Table 1- Zionist Immigration Waves between 1882-May 1948

Waves of *Aliyah* (Immigration)	Volume (Thousands)
First *Aliyah* (1882-1903)	20-30
Second *Aliyah* (1904-1914)	35-45
Third *Aliyah* (1919-1923)	35
Fourth *Aliyah* (1932-1938)	82
Fifth *Aliyah* (1924-1931)	217
World War II (1939-1945)	92
Post-World War II (1947- May 1948)	61
Total (1882 - May 1948)	542-562

Source: Shoshana Neuman, "Aliyah to Israel: Immigration under Conditions of Adversity", *IZA Discussion Paper*, No. 89, December 1999, p.60.

At the end of the 19th century Jews became subject to repression in Russia. In 1881 they were blamed for being responsible for the assassination of the Tsar Alexander II. After a wave of *pogroms*[18] and as a result of the oppressive policies of the Tsar Alexander III, numbers of Jews began to emigrate from Russia, mainly to Western countries, in what was called the "First *Aliyah*," the migration of Jews to the Land of Israel.[19]

The First *Aliyah* is accepted as the first modern and organized wave of Zionist *Aliyahs*. As shown above, 20,000–30,000 Jews immigrated to the region between 1882 and 1903. The majority of these immigrants came from Russia, and some of these established agricultural communities, founding new settlements including Rishon Le-Zion, Zichron Ya'akov, Petach Tikvah, Rosh Pina and Gedera. During this period the

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18   The Russian word *pogrom* means "to destroy, to attack, to demolish violently". It usually refers to organized violent attacks against Jews in the Russian Empire in the 19th and 20th centuries.

19   Bernard Reich, *A Brief History of Israel*, p.14.

first Tel Aviv neighbourhoods were also built by members of the First *Aliyah*.[20] However, mainly due to financial difficulties, nearly half of them had to leave Palestine.

The Second *Aliyah* is the name given to the period of immigration between 1904 and 1914. During this period 35,000–45,000 Jews came to the region from Russia and Poland in reaction to the pogroms that followed the Russian Revolution of 1905.[21] However, it should be noted that unlike those who participated in the First *Aliyah*, the immigrants of the Second *Aliyah* carried socialist ideals, and most of the symbols and institutions of the State of Israel were established within this ideological framework. Prominent political figures of the country were members of the Second *Aliyah*, including David Ben-Gurion, the first prime minister of Israel. These people established number of political and administrative institutions in their new land. For instance, they established the first *kibbutz*, Degania, and formed the first self-defense organizations, such as *HaShomer* (the Watchman) in 1909.[22]

The prominent leaders of this *Aliyah* were primarily influenced by the socialist thought of Borochov and Gordon. The new city of Tel Aviv and its well-known neighborhoods such as Jaffa and Ahuzat Bayit were founded during this period. This period also witnessed significant developments that have become an inseparable part of the State of Israel, along with the revival of Hebrew as the national language, the establishment of the political parties and labor organizations. They improved education at the primary and intermediate levels, and contributed to the development of higher education, art, literature and journalism.[23] The Second *Aliyah* ended with the outbreak of the First World War.

The Third *Aliyah* (1919–1923) bore similarities to the Second *Aliyah*. During this period, 37,000 immigrants came to the region during these years, motivated by the significant international events such as the First World War, the Bolshevik Revolution, the Russian Civil War, massive pogroms in Eastern Europe and the Balfour Declaration. Impacted and encouraged by the Russian desire to create a socialist society and

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20   ibid., pp.14-15, Mark Tessler, *A History of Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, p.60.

21   Mark Tessler, *A History of Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, p.61.

22   *HaShomer* was crucial in Zionist movement because after 1920 its members established the *Haganah* that was the main component of the Israel Defense Forces after the establishment of the State Israel in 1948.

23   Mark Tessler, *A History of Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, pp.67-68.

by the 1919 Balfour Declaration of Britain[24] recognizing the legitimacy of a Jewish National Home in Palestine, the socialist ideas that took root during the second wave began to bloom during these years.

Most of the Zionist representative institutions, like *Asefat Nivcharim* (the Assembly of Representatives), were founded during this period. Other national institutions, such as the *Histadrut* (the General Federation of Laborers in the Land of Israel) and the *Haganah* (the Defense), were founded by the members of the Third *Aliyah* as well.

The Fourth and the Fifth *Aliyahs* were the largest waves of immigration during the pre-state period. Between 1924–1928 and 1929–1939, 82,000 and 217,000 immigrants respectively, comprising much of the professional classes of Poland and Germany, came to the region in the wake of World War II to escape the Holocaust.[25] These immigrants, who preferred to live in the urban centers, contributed to the development of the cities in the center of the country after the 1930s. The Port of Haifa and oil refineries were completed during this period, and this changed the economic structure of the country, which had previously been dominated by agriculture. The Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Technicon (Israel Institute of Technology) in Haifa were also established in 1924/25.[26] Most of the country's well-known political figures and officials were members of this wave of immigration.

As can be seen from the economic/social profiles of the immigrants, this population did not share the socialist ideals of earlier waves of immigration. Vladimir Jabotinsky, the founder of Revisionist Zionism who criticized the socialist policies of the previous pioneers and emphasized middle class values, became the new hero of many of these immigrants.

In order to put quotas on Jewish immigration to Palestine, the British Mandate published the White Paper of 1939[27], yet following the rise of Nazism in Germany, illegal immigration to the region, called *Aliyah Bet/*

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24   Balfour Declaration of 1917, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/balfour.asp.

25   Leslie Stein, *Hope Fulfilled: The Rise of Modern Israel*, (Westport: Preager, 2003), p.196.

26   Martin Kloke, "The Development of Zionism Until the Founding of the State of Israel", *European History Online*, http://www.ieg-ego.eu/en/threads/transnational-movements-and-organisations/international-organisations-and-congresses/martin-kloke-the-development-of-zionism-until-the-founding-of-the-state-of-israel-1914-1948.

27   British White Paper of 1939, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/brwh1939.asp.

Ha'apalah began. While the White Paper of 1939 restricted the total number of immigrants to 75,000 over five years between 1940–1944, with the impact of Holocaust in Europe, nearly 92,000 Jews came to the region, most of whom had no recourse but to enter by illegal means.[28]

After World War II, 61,000 Jews set out to immigrate to the country. However, because of the mentioned limitations and restrictions, many of the ships carrying them were captured by the British Navy; the migrants were deported to refugee camps in Cyprus.[29] These policies by the British administration understandably caused disappointment and anger among the Jews in the region because most of the migrants were survivors of the Nazi concentration camps. The restrictions that were put during the Second World War continued aftermath of the war as well. Following the application by the British government to the UN for help in solving this problem, the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) visited Palestine in the summer of 1947, resulting in the passage of the UN Partition Resolution of November 1947.[30] This plan gave the Jewish people national rights over parts of Mandatory Palestine.

After the establishment of the State of Israel, the Jewish Agency for Israel became the main institution responsible for *Aliyah* among the diaspora. While immigration continued during this period, the naming process of *Aliyahs* was ended. Between 1948 and 1950 more than 500,000 Jews from Eastern Europe or Arab countries immigrated to Israel. Immigration was institutionalized with several acts and laws, becoming official government policy. Two years after independence, on July 5, 1950, the Israeli government passed the "Law of Return," which stated that anyone Jewish could come to Israel.[31] Subsequent revisions through 1970 extended the rights to immigration and citizenship, including both active and passive voting rights, to those not born Jews who had a Jewish father or grandparent, and to the spouses of those eligible.[32]

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28 Dalia Ofer, *Escaping the Holocaust : Illegal Immigration to the Land of Israel 1934-1944*, (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p.7.

29 Dalia Ofer, "Holocaust Survivors as Immigrants: The Case of Israel and the Cyprus Detainees", *Modern Judaism*, Volume 16, No. 1, February 1996, pp.1-2.

30 UN General Assembly, A/RES/181(II), 29 November 1947, Resolution 181 (II). Future government of Palestine, http://domino.un.org/unispal.nsf/0/7f0af2bd897689b785256c330061d253.

31 The Law of Return 5710 (1950), http://www.knesset.gov.il/laws/special/eng/return.htm.

32 Law of Return (Amendment No. 2) 5730 (1970), http://www.knesset.gov.il/laws/special/eng/return.htm.

To sum up, it can be argued that each of the Zionist *Aliyahs* that brought hundreds of thousands of Jews to Palestine had its own ideological characteristics. Socialism was the most influential founding ideology among immigrants before the independence of the State of Israel. After independence, *Aliyah* became the official state policy of Israel.

The Ideological Roots of Labor Zionism

According to Frank, without "the first four waves of immigration, 1880–1930, and the dominant Socialist Zionist democratic leadership, the State of Israel would never have existed."[33] Labor Zionism, which dominated the politics and organizational structure of the Jewish community in the region during the pre-state period, became the main component of the founding ideology of the State of Israel and turned out to be an inseparable part of the political culture of the country. Today, we can observe the impact of these political/social traditions on contemporary political institutions and the society at large.

It should be emphasized that Labor Zionism was influential during the Second *Aliyah* (1904–1914) as a reaction to the First *Aliyah*'s settlements, which had been organized on capitalist terms. According to Adler, the following issues were the focus of this period: "1- socialism 2- Hebrew became the language of communication and 3- security and self-defense and 4- the employment of Arab labor."[34]

Most members of the Second *Aliyah* were affected by socialism in the sense that they believed the realization of a just society could only be achieved through the idea of equality. For some others, socialism meant taking a stand against anti-Semitism, and was a way of escaping the ghettos. During this period thousands of Jewish migrants holding socialist ideas went to Palestine. Leaders of the settlement movement established collective farms after 1905, affected by ideologues like Ber Borochov and Aaron David Gordon.

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33   Ivan Frank, "Where Would Israel be without Its Democratic–Socialist Roots?", *The Jewish Chronicle*, 19 January 2010, http://www.thejewishchronicle.net/view/full_story/5171784/article-Where-would-Israel-be-without-its-democratic–socialist-roots.

34   Gerald M. Adler, *The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 1860-2006: Legal Aspects in a Historical and Political Context,* August 2008, http://www.arab-israel-legal-issues.com/.

Pioneers of the Movement

In order to understand the ideological basis of Labor Zionism we have to look at the ideas of the prominent political/intellectual figures of the Second *Aliyah*. Moses Hess' 1862 book "Rome and Jerusalem: The Last National Question" is accepted as the first document to propose a socialist state in the land of Palestine. Hess argues that only this would help to create a healthier Jewish society in which Jews would have more productive occupations, as opposed to non-productive jobs.[35]

Borochov, another socialist Zionist, joined the first Labor Zionist party, the World Confederation of *Poalei Tziyon* (Workers of Zion), in 1905. His most important contribution to Labor Zionism was to draw a Marxist theoretical framework for Labor Zionism. According to Borochov, the organizational society has a pyramidal structure consisting of the workers, intelligentsia and capitalists. In his analysis, however, Jews became economically inferior because diaspora created an "inverted pyramid" in Jewish society, lacking a working class.[36] Accordingly, the main reason for the Jewish problem was the fact that "the Jews, being guests everywhere, were never fully integrated into the class structure of their society… The Jewish class structure formed an "inverted pyramid" with fewer real proletarians and more professionals, intelligentsia and people engaged in non-essential consumer production […] As economies developed, native populations produced their own professionals and intelligentsia, and competition for jobs in all spheres intensified. This generated antisemitism, because native populations coveted the jobs and positions of Jews, and it forced Jews to migrate from country to country, in a 'stychic process.'"[37]

Similar to Hess, Borochov offered a solution to help fill the missing parts of the inverted pyramid of Jewish society: a socialist society in which the majority of Jews became workers and peasants. Of course, Jews could achieve all these goals only in their own country. [38] These ideas from Borochov shaped the members of the Second *Aliyah*.

35 Moses Hess, *Rome and Jerusalem: A Study in Jewish Nationalism*, (Translated by Meyer Waxman), (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1918).

36 Ber Borochov, Nationalism and Class Struggle: Selected Writings, (New York: Poalei Zion of America, 1937), p.59.

37 Ami Isserof, "Ber Borochov: The Economic Development of the Jewish People 1916", http://www.zionismontheweb.org/ber_borochov_Economic_Development.htm.

38 Ami Isserof, "Ber Borochov: Eretz Yisrael in our Program and Tactics 1917", http://www.zionismontheweb.org/ber_borochov_Eretz_Yisrael.htm.

Aaron David Gordon, who was one of the founding fathers of the ideology of Labor Zionism, and was the leader of the *Hapoel HaTzair* (The Young Worker) movement, supported establishing a society of Jewish peasants. The first *kibbutz* was established by him and his supporters in Deganya. Gordon asserted that Jews were parasites in their societies. They suffered in the diaspora because they were not able to participate in creative labor. According to him, physical labor was the most important solution to all problems suffered by Jews; working the land would be a sacred mission for the Jewish people, agriculture would be a uniting factor for people and justify Israel's continued existence there.[39] After drawing a connection between the land and the people, Gordon declared the importance of the return of the Jew to the land of Israel. Return to the land, for Gordon, would transform and revitalize the Jewish people. He summarized his ideas with the following:

As we now come to re-establish our path among the ways of living nations of the earth, we must make sure that we find the right path. We must create a new people, a human people whose attitude toward other peoples is informed with the sense of human brotherhood and whose attitude toward nature and all within it is inspired by noble urges of life-loving creativity. All the forces of our history, all the pain that has accumulated in our national soul, seem to impel us in that direction [...] we are engaged in a creative endeavor the like of which is itself not to be found in the whole history of mankind: the rebirth and rehabilitation of a people that has been uprooted and scattered to the winds [...][40]

David Ben-Gurion, the first prime minister of the State of Israel and a member of *Poalei Tziyon*, supported Gordon's ideas on Jewish labor. He believed that economic power was the most important component of political power. The destiny of Zionist existence in the region therefore depended on the creation of an independent and powerful Jewish economy. In order to achieve this objective, a Jewish working class and a powerful Jewish economic structure should have been created.[41] During the 1920s, Ben-Gurion also outlined the institutional framework for a Jewish workers' state in the land of Palestine. Joseph

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39   Aaron David Gordon, "People and Labor (1911)", in Arthur Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea*, (Philedelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1997), pp.372-374.

40   Aaron David Gordon, "Our Tasks Ahead (1920)", in Arthur Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea*, (Philedelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1997), pp.381-382.

41   David Ben-Gurion, "The Imperatives of the Jewish Revolution (1944)", in Arthur Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea*, (Philedelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1997), pp.606-619.

Trumpeldor, an anarcho-communist and Nachman Syrkin, leader of the American *Poalei Tziyon* movement, were the other prominent supporters of the Labor Zionist movement in Palestine.

The Ideology of Labor Zionism

It has been argued that the main premises of the Labor Zionism were not based on the Marxist class struggle. One of the central concerns of the leaders of the Second *Aliyah* was the economic independence of their community. According to these leaders, dependence on economic assistance from the diaspora would negatively affect their political independence in the land of Israel. They thus perceived such economic assistance as parasitism and ignored all signs of philanthropy.[42]

As Schindler argues the Second *Aliyah* was the based on the ideology of *Kibbush HaAvoda* (The Conquest of Jewish Labor) and the right to work that was crucial to independence.[43] Physical labor was perceived as a way to learn self-discipline and self-reliance. It should be underlined that these leaders also cited potential dangers related to the employment of Arab labor, because a cheap labor force could create a typical colonial structure, which would adversely affect future immigration waves. In 1934 Ben-Gurion claimed, "We do not want to create a situation like that which exists in South Africa, where the whites are the owners and rulers, and the blacks are the workers. If we do not do all kinds of work, easy and hard, skilled and unskilled, if we become merely landlords, then this will not be our homeland."[44]

However, since most Jewish immigrants preferred to live in the cities, the idea of the *kibbutz*, the collective community based on agriculture, was put forward. According to Ben-Gurion, the *kibbutz* movement became one of the most efficient ways to guarantee Jewish labor.[45] Lockman argues that these policies not only transformed the Jewish community into "proper (preferably agrarian) worker-pioneers through physical labor in the national cause, but also the creation of a secure

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42   Ruben Schindler, "The Pioneering Ideology and the Roots of Social Welfare in the Pre-State Period of Israel", *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, Issue 52, No. 4, 1976, p.385.

43   ibid., p.385.

44   Shabtai Teveth, *Ben-Gurion and the Palestinian Arabs: From Peace to War*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1985), p.140.

45   Zeev Sternhell, *The Founding Myths of Israel: Nationalism, Socialism, and the Making of the Jewish State*, (Princeton University Press, 1998), p.74.

Jewish working class in Palestine through the maximal exclusion of less expensive indigenous Arab labor from employment in all segments of the Jewish sector of the local economy."[46]

However, the idea of "conquest of labor" was not initially achieved because of the existence of more experienced and less expensive Arab workers for hire in the settlements of the First *Aliyah*. The members of the First *Aliyah* had little or no experience in farming, and could not compete with Arab peasants. However, hiring Arab workers created a serious problem both between owners and socialist and among Zionists themselves before and during the Second *Aliyah*, when new immigrants performed jobs on the farms of the members of the First *Aliyah*. However these immigrants preferred to employ local Arabs because they provided cheap labor. This resulted in a negative reaction among the new immigrants, who rapidly organized to emphasize shared Jewish identity and common nationalistic ideals as a warning to the members of the First *Aliyah*.[47] "Hebrew Labor" or "conquest of labor" became the new slogan of the socialists, who put pressure on owners to employ only Jewish labor and at higher wages to the exclusion of the Arab peasants.

As Even-Zohar pointed out, the members of the Second *Aliyah,* particularly Ben-Gurion and his friends, developed the term *Avodah Ivrit* (Hebrew Labor), which was referred to as "Jewish labor," to describe a "new Hebrew" identity they desired to create to replace the "old Diaspora Jewish" identity.[48] On the other hand, the concept of alien labor was also discussed during this period because of its relationship with Hebrew labor. In 1906, Ben-Gurion pointed out the reality that the agricultural settlements of the immigrants of the First *Aliyah* hired Arabs as guards, adding, "Was it conceivable that here too we should be deep in Galuth (exile), hiring strangers to guard our property and protect our lives?"[49] Similarly, in his writings on the members of the First *Aliyah*, Ben-Gurion underlined the term *Avodah Zarah*, which means both "alien labor" and "idol worship," and which is one of the most important sins in Judaism.[50]

46   Zachary Lockman, "Land, Labor and the Logic of Zionism: A Critical Engagement with Gershon Shafir*", Settler Colonial Studies*, Volume 2, No. 1, 2012, p.12.

47   Simha Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians*, (New York : Barnes & Noble Book, 1979), p.199.

48   Itamar Even-Zohar, "The Emergence of a Native Hebrew Culture in Palestine, 1882-1948", in Yehuda Reinharz and Anita Shapira (eds.), *Essential Papers on Zionism*, (New York: New York University Press, 1996), pp.727-729.

49   David Ben-Gurion, *Rebirth and Destiny of Israel*, (London: Thomas Yoseloff Ltd., 1959), p.14.

50   Anita Shapira, *Land and Power: The Zionist Resort to Force, 1881-1948*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1992), p.64.

However, this perception of "conquest of labor" divided the Socialist Zionists due to its discriminatory discourse. Meir Dizengoff, a prominent leader of Zionism and the first mayor of Tel Aviv, summarized his critique of this issue with the following words:

How can Jews, who demand emancipation in Russia, rob rights and act selfishly toward other workers upon coming to Eretz Israel? If it is possible for many a people to hide fairness and justice behind cannon smoke, how and behind what shall we hide fairness and justice? We should absolutely not deceive ourselves with terrible visions. We shall never possess cannons, even if the goyim[51] shall bear arms against one another for ever. Therefore, we cannot but settle in our land fairly and justly, to live and let live.[52]

According to Gordon, on the other hand, this was not a discriminatory ideology:

But labour is the only force which binds man to the soil […] it is also the basic energy for the creation of national culture. This is what we do not have- but we are not aware of missing it. We are a people without a country, without a national living language, without a national culture. But we seem to think that if we have no labour it does not matter— let Ivan, John or Mustafa do the work, while we busy ourselves with producing a culture, with creating national values and with enthroning absolute justice in the world.[53]

While it had a little practical success in the beginning, the idea "for Jewish labor, for Jews to employ only Jews" became the main symbol of the new society in the discourse of independence. Gershon Shafir asserted that while about 10,000 workers went to region during the Second *Aliyah*, many of them ultimately became discouraged and left.[54] Supporters of this idea who established Labor Zionism became the most important leaders of the Zionist movement in the 1930s.

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51   The Hebrew word *Goyim* (sing. *Goy*) means "nations" used to refer to non-Jews.

52   Quoted from Gershon Shafir, *Land, Labor and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 1882–1914*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), p.79.

53   Aaron David Gordon, "People and Labour(1911)", in Arthur Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea*, (Philedelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1997), p.373.

54   Gershon Shafir, *Land, Labor and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, p.75.

Jewish workers began to replace Arabs mainly after the big immigration waves of the 1930s and with the impact of the Arab riots in 1929 and general strike of Arab workers in 1936. The first violent campaign aimed at removing Arab workers from the major Jewish cities was initiated in *Histadrut* in 1933.[55] UNSCOP report was summarizing the economic partition of Palestine in 1947 as follows:

Although the total population of Palestine is less than two million, its economic life presents the complex phenomenon of two distinctive economies - one Jewish and one Arab, closely involved with one another and yet in essential features separate. ... Apart from a small number of experts, no Jewish workers are employed in Arab undertakings and apart from citrus groves (where some Arabs work as seasonal labourers on Jewish farms), very few Arabs are employed in Jewish enterprises Indeed, government service, the Potash Company and the Oil Refinery are almost the only places where Arabs and Jews meet as coworkers in the same organizations. There are considerable differences between the rates of wage for Arab and Jewish workers in similar occupations, in the size of investment, and in productivity and labour costs which can be explained only by lack of direct competition between the two groups.[56]

Institutional Achievements

Institutional achievements that helped to implement the ideology of Socialist Zionism began with the initiatives of the World Zionist Organization's Palestine Office. As a first attempt, the leaders of the new ideology founded the *HeChalutz* (The Pioneer) movement, which prepared them for the conditions in Israel. In 1920 some of them founded the *Gdud HaAvodah* (Labor Brigade), which was seen as an autonomous ideological and organizational institution aimed at creating a true socialist society in the region.[57] The moderate wing of the *Gdud* could adapt its radical ideas to the social reality of the country. This move-

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55 Zachary Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies Arab and Jewish Workers in Palestine, 1906–1948*, (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1996), p.209.

56 Official Records of the Second Session of the General Assembly, Supplement No. 11, United Nations Special Committee on Palestine Report to the General Assembly, Volume 1, Lake Success, New York, 1947, http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/07175DE9FA2DE563852568D300 6E10F3.

57 Zachary Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies Arab and Jewish Workers in Palestine, 1906–1948*, p.121.

ment also established large collectives or "*kibbutzim*," such as Ein Charod or Tel Yosef, which could bring together hundreds of members living according to communal principles.[58]

In this period agricultural schools and *kibbutizm* were founded to settle Jewish labor on the land. An economic cooperative was established in Sejera, and the first *kibbutz* was established at Degania on the Sea of Galilee in 1909.[59] While thought to be temporary, it became a model for other *kibbutzim*. It should be noted that the *kibbutz* movement became the cornerstone of Labor Zionism in Palestine, and later provided political and military leadership.

At the time, these *kibbutz* movements were established along political and ideological lines. Despite some ideological differences, these settlements shared in a basic idea of socialism: to each according to his/her needs and from each according to his/her ability. According to this understanding, the collective owned all property and profits. As Near asserted among these *kibbutzim* EinHarod was accepted as one of the most democratic.[60]

While its main objective had been settlement, the *kibbutz* movement became a crucial defense organization, especially during the 1948 War. In the 1950s and 1960s numerous members of the movement became high-ranking military officials and prominent politicians in the country.[61] After independence, however, the social and economic structures of the *kibbutzim* changed significantly. It is asserted that today it is still possible to see many pure *kibbutzim* in Israel that retained the socialist and democratic ideals in 1930, with Gan Shmuel being cited as an example. Hazor, another *kibbutz*, still maintains collective responsibility for its members' health, education and welfare. On the other hand, it can be said that the original *kibbutz* ideology had disappeared completely in some *kibbutzim*, including Gesher Haziv.[62]

58   Mitchell Cohen, *Zion and State: Nation, Class and the Shaping of Modern Israel*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), p.112.

59   Mark Tessler, *A History of Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, p.64.

60   Henry Near, *The Kibbutz Movement: A History, Volume 1: Origins and Growth, 1909-1939* , (London/Portland, Oregon: Vallentine Mitchell, 1997), pp.136-148.

61   Kevin Avruch, "Kibbutz and Moshav", in Helen Chapin Metz (ed.), *Israel : A Country Study*, (Washington D.C.: Federal Research Division, 1990).

62   Jo-Ann Mort and Gary Brenner, *Our Hearts Invented a Place: Can Kibbutzim Survive in Today's Israel?,* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), pp.50-61.

In the period of the Third *Aliyah*, the Workers' Cooperative, *Moshav Ovdim* was established, providing private spaces for immigrants. Unlike in *kibbutz*, in such settlements, for example, members lived in separate family units; families owned their houses and farmed separate parcels of land. The first cooperative, Nahalal, was established in 1921.[63]

Another socialist institution was the *Histadrut* (the General Federation of Laborers in the Land of Israel), which was founded in 1920 to unify the different labor parties. This federation both served as a trade union, and constituted a *Hevrat HaOvdim* (Society of Workers), which owned a number of businesses and factories.[64] Therefore, while the *Histadrut* represented labor, it was also one of the largest employers in the country. Another key objective of the *Histadrut* was to help absorb immigrants by providing them jobs. As Gelvin pointed out, the *Histadrut* could "regulate the size of the labor market by pressuring Jewish employers to hire its members exclusively."[65] *Histadrut*, which became the main economic/social organization for immigrants in 1930s, also provided several social services, including health insurance, a vocational school system, and a youth movement.

In 1920, *Asefat Hanivharim* (the Assembly of Representatives) was established as the elected parliamentary assembly of Jewish immigrants, and was active until the first Knesset was founded in 1949.[66]

These institutions, which had been founded by the Labor Zionists based on the ideas of egalitarianism and democracy, became cornerstones of the State of Israel. However, it can be argued that during and after the 1920s, the socialist principles of the Labor movement were disregarded in favor of collaboration with the middle classes, with the leaders' priorities being building the nation and protecting the private sector in the settlements. As Ze'ev Sternhell put it, labor leaders had used socialist principles as "mobilizing myths."[67]

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63   Kevin Avruch, "Kibbutz and Moshav", in Helen Chapin Metz (ed.), *Israel : A Country Study*, (Washington D.C.: Federal Research Division, 1990).

64   Mitchell Cohen, *Zion and State: Nation, Class and the Shaping of Modern Israel*, p.111.

65   James L. Gelvin, *The Israel-Palestine Conflict: One Hundred Years of War*, p.68.

66   Rafael Medoff and Chaim I. Waxman, *The A to Z of Zionism*, (Lanham: Scarecrowpress Inc., 2008), p.30.

67   Zeev Sternhell, *The Founding Myths of Israel: Nationalism, Socialism, and the Making of the Jewish State*, , p.240.

Political Parties

Labor values were represented within two socialist parties founded by immigrants of the Second *Aliyah* before the First World War: *Poalei Zion* and *Hapoel HaTzair*.[68] These political organizations were led by socialist pioneers until the 1960s. Israel's most prominent leaders were also the activists from these parties, including Itzhak Ben-Zvi and David Ben-Gurion.

The *Poale Zion* Party, which followed Borochov, had a left wing and a right wing. The *Ahdut HaAvoda* party was founded by the right wing in 1919. The left wing of the *Poale Zion* Party merged with the *kibbutz* movement *HaShomer HaTzair* to establish the *Mapam* Party in 1948.[69] *Hapoel HaTzair* had been established as another Zionist party with socialist tendencies in 1905. While the party supported the socialist ideals of social justice and labor, party leaders such as Gordon also stressed the importance of Hebrew/Jewish culture.[70]

In 1930, *Ahdut HaAvoda* and *Hapoel HaTzair* merged to form the *Mapai* Party (*Miflegeth Poalei Eretz Yisrael*-The Party of the Workers of the Land of Israel), which included all of mainstream Labor Zionism. The *Mapai* Party, the largest leftist party in the country, became the dominant socialist power before and after independence.[71] While the party had a socialist outlook, it was argued by prominent party figures like Ben-Gurion, party leader between 1930–1953 and 1955–1963, that in order to achieve their socialist objectives they had to work with non-socialist parties. In 1965, the *Mapai* allied with *Ahdut HaAvoda* and became a part of the Labor Alignment. In the same year, Ben-Gurion established *Rafi* as a result of a split in *Mapai.* Three years later, *Mapai*, *Ahdut HaAvoda* and *Rafi* fused into the Israeli Labor Party.[72] The *Mapai* Party, with its prominent political figure, and its followers were the most effective political organizations in Israeli politics until the 1970s.

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68 Itzhak Kerstein, *The Conflict Between National and International Ideas in the Kibbutz Movement*, Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, (Ottawa, Canada: University of Ottawa, 1967), pp.54-55.

69 ibid., pp.98-99.

70 Spencer C. Tucker (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, Volume One*, (Santa Barbara, California: ABC CLIO, Inc., 2008), pp.422-423.

71 Itzhak Kerstein, *The Conflict Between National and International Ideas in the Kibbutz Movement*, p.111.

72 Clive Jones and Emma Murphy, *Israel: Challenges to Identity, Democracy and the State*, (London, New York: Routledge, 2002), p.36.

After Independence

After the establishment of the State of Israel, the Labor Zionist movement became one of the most effective political movements of the country. However, Labor Zionism, upon which the state was founded, could not adapt itself to new economic and political circumstances, particularly after the Six-Day War.

It can be argued that the Arab-Israeli conflict, which affected all political movements of both communities, reshaped or transformed the discourse of the Labor Zionist movement. After the 1967 War, the Movement for Greater Israel, which supported the government's efforts to maintain all territory occupied during the War, was created by some well-known figures of the Labor Zionist movement.[73] Meanwhile, the Israeli Labor Party argued that Israel had to withdraw these territories. This policy of withdrawal became the main pillar of the Labor Party, especially after the Oslo Peace Process in the 1990s.[74] Today, the Labor Party of Israel, which can be defined as a social democratic party, has cut its ties with the socialist tradition. Socialist ideas were replaced by the capitalist and neo-liberal economic policies first, and foreign policy issues, particularly the Arab-Israeli conflict took over the main agenda of the Labour Zionists.

Conclusion

At the end of the 19th century, Jews who were humiliated and oppressed in Russia and in Eastern Europe were trying to find a radical solution to their suffering. Zionism, as a form of Jewish nationalism, emerged during this period to offer solutions to these problems. The establishment of a Jewish state became the historic mission of Zionism.

Labor Zionism became the backbone of Jewish society after the Second *Aliyah*. The idea of an independent Jewish state, which was supported by the ideals of social justice and self-emancipation, motivated the pioneers of Labor Zionism to unify and establish the social and

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73 Tamar S. Hermann, *The Israeli Peace Movement: A Shattered Dream*, (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p.79.

74 ibid., p.122-126, Clive Jones and Emma Murphy, *Israel: Challenges to Identity, Democracy and the State*, p.36.

political institutions that made up the founding organizations of the State of Israel. The socialist ideas on economy took shape during the Second *Aliyah*, including the idea of Jewish Labor. These helped inspire the organization of cooperative labor in the region and the creation of an economy independent of the Arab population. The first *kibbutzim* and *moshavim* were established during this period. With the immigration of middle-class professionals from Germany and Poland, the societal structure began to change, yet Labor Zionism continued to dominate Israeli politics during these years. Most Israeli politicians, bureaucrats and high-level officials before and after independence had been members of the socialist-inspired Second and Third *Aliyahs*. Indeed, this would help to create a more secular, democratic and egalitarian country.

It can be argued that Labor Zionism, which disregarded its socialist roots and concentrated on the nation-building process, had undergone considerable change. Pioneers of the movement, who had taken a constructive role in Israel's establishment both ideologically and organizationally, accomplished their goals. However the socialist ideals that had been the symbol of the new society lost their political influence after the Six-Day War of 1967 and were replaced with Revisionist Zionism. Today, rather than socialist ideals, the point of greatest divergence between Labor Zionists and others lies in the stance on the Arab-Israeli conflict.

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