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# LABOR'S

## ROLE IN PALESTINE

by  
**BEN HALPERN**

*fifteen cents*

**Labor Zionist Organization of America**  
**POALE ZION**

45 East 17th Street

New York 3, N. Y.

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# **LABOR'S ROLE IN PALESTINE**

## ***Introduction: A Summary Record and Evaluation***

This pamphlet is the first of a series which the Labor Zionist Organization of America—Poale Zion will publish in order to acquaint the American public with the purposes, views, and activities of Labor Zionism. It deals with the significance of Labor Zionism and the contribution of labor in the history of the upbuilding of Palestine, and in the emergency situation of the present and the near future in Palestine.

Another pamphlet which is scheduled will describe more precisely the role of the American Labor Zionist Organization in that history, and its functions in regard to Palestine today and in the near future. Others in the series will deal with Labor Zionism in its relation to Diaspora problems, particularly in America.

We hope in this way that significant and little known material will be made available which will cast light upon events of the recent past and also prove instructive on many urgent current questions.

**BARUCH ZUCKERMAN**

## LABOR'S ROLE IN PALESTINE

What is Labor Zionism? This is a question which it is practically impossible to answer in terms of dogmas, principles, ideology. The Labor Zionists are a progressive political grouping including some who are Marxists and some who are non-Marxists. They are a colonizing force, pushing forward the frontiers of Jewish Palestine, at some points through "communal" or collective enterprise, and at others through traditional methods similar to those of private enterprise, or often in cooperation with private enterprise.

It is much easier to answer another question: *Who* are the Labor Zionists? This, indeed, is the question which should properly be asked in order to gain a clear understanding of the place and function of the worker in the upbuilding of Palestine, as well as of the program of the Labor Zionists, who support the workers in Palestine.

It was not merely force of social circumstances that made the Jewish workers in Palestine a distinct group in the Palestine Jewish community. The majority of Jewish workers in Palestine today are farmers, builders, factory hands, or truckmen not because they were born to those trades, but because they *chose* to be workers. Jewish labor in Palestine is a class constituted largely by choice, or, we should rather say, by voluntary enlistment.

The motives behind the choice to become a worker in Palestine are the *general*, the quintessential motives of Zionism. The Zionist workman is not a fractional part of the movement; he is the essential Zionist, the Zionist who has taken up as his *personal duty* the primary functions without which the success of Zionism would be inconceivable—the functions of building the foundations and the structure of the National Home and of defending them.

In building and defending the National Home, the Jewish workers developed unique methods of pioneering and cooperation, corresponding to the unique problems they faced. The Jew-

ish workers had to wrestle with a new kind of frontier: not the geographical frontier of a virgin land, rich and expansive, but the technological and social frontier of an old, old land, depleted by centuries of neglect, which could be recaptured from wilderness only by skill, application, patience, and planning, and only by the heroic self-discipline and cooperative methods of a new type of pioneer community. In the collective and cooperative farm settlements, in the whole system of cooperation and mutual aid organized under the Histadrut (General Federation of Jewish Workers in Palestine)\* the pioneer community established a network of concrete institutions in which was crystallized the essential spirit of Zionism, as it was formed through actual work in Palestine. Labor Zionists are those who adhere to the principles of those Histadrut institutions and who give them their full support.

Thus, Labor Zionism is not a *wing* of the Zionist movement, as terminological *cliches* encourage some political rivals fallaciously to pretend. As we have seen, the difference between the *Jewish worker* in Palestine and other Zionists is simply that the worker has been able to assume *personally* those duties which all Zionists hold, or should hold, are the primary prerequisites to success in building the Jewish National Home. *Labor Zionists* differ from other Zionists in placing support of the workers in Palestine, of those upon whose efforts the whole structure stands or falls, above other, special principles. The political rivals of Labor Zionism, in so far as they are guided by their ideologies, tend to place their *special principles* above the need to support those workers whom even they must acknowledge to be doing the essential things logically implied in the ideal of the National Home. Whether the special principles of competing Zionist political groups are the demand to maintain the dominance of *orthodox religious rites and ideas* (Mizrachi) or to follow a particular *political and strategic plan of tactics* in Zionist diplomacy (Revisionists, Jewish State Party), or to protect the *special economic interests* of orchard owners and landlords (the so-called "Burghers' Bloc" among the General Zionists), it is obvious that these are special or even *partisan* versions of Zionism, as

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\* For an up-to-date account, read Samuel Kurland's *Cooperative Palestine*, Sharon Books, \$3.00.

compared with the general and essential expression of Zionism of the Jewish worker.

There are, of course, "General Zionists," particularly in the Diaspora countries, who disclaim any special principles except those of Zionism itself, and yet do not specifically give full support to the policies of the workers' movement in Palestine. This is because, not living close to the reality of Palestine, they conceive the essence of Zionism abstractly, instead of in the concrete terms of its materialization during sixty years of Zionist work in the Homeland. But the responsibilities of Diaspora Zionists in the framework of the whole World Zionist Organization are far more than merely the responsibilities of sympathizers. At the Zionist Congresses, and in the Zionist Executive between Congresses, Diaspora Zionists are continually forced to make decisions on concrete questions; and these decisions continually divide the "General" Zionists into one section which backs the special interest group of the "Burghers' Bloc" in Palestine, and another, progressive section which stands behind the *essential Zionism* of the workers united in the Histadrut. Diaspora Labor Zionism, including the Labor Zionist Organization of America-Poale Zion, is founded on the full consciousness that such decisions continually face all Zionists in the Diaspora, and on a basic decision in favor of the general principles of *essential Zionism* as exemplified by the workers' movement in Palestine.

It is true, also, that there are minority labor parties within the Histadrut, particularly left-wing parties, which add to the general Histadrut principles of cooperation and mutuality as the way of Zionism in realization, *special principles* of their own: a Marxist ideology, and various kinds of partisan ideas on the political aims and current tactics of Zionism. These groups remain essentially within the Labor Zionist bloc by virtue of their full and unrestricted devotion, their *personal* dedication to the tasks of essential Zionism which the worker has taken upon himself in Palestine, and their adherence to the principles of the Histadrut. But the greater part of the workers in Palestine have refused to bind themselves to narrow principles which would exclude from the ranks of their party any worker who adheres to the principles of essential Zionism, as exemplified in the cooperative institutions of the Histadrut. These workers are represented by the major labor party in Palestine, MAPAI, the Pales-

tine Workers Party. MAPAI stands as the embodiment of the spirit of two generations of workers in Palestine, who strove for the unity, above ideology, of all those who devote themselves to rebuilding Palestine by hand and brain and who abide by the principles of cooperation and mutuality exemplified in the Histadrut and its constituent institutions. They may differ freely in ideological matters and regarding current political aims or tactics, but they are united in a single party based on the principles of essential, concrete Zionism, and directed toward the establishment of the Cooperative Jewish Commonwealth.

The closer one comes to the actual scenes of the historic transformation implied by Zionism, whether in Palestine or in Europe, the more ridiculous becomes the attempt to pass off Labor Zionism as a wing, a fragmentary part of the movement. We refer to the fact that 90 percent of the farm workers, and about three-fourths of the whole working population of Jewish Palestine are enrolled in the Histadrut; that the Histadrut comprises about one-third of the whole Jewish population in Palestine; that in Jewish communal elections and Zionist Congress elections in Palestine, the Labor Zionist bloc used to command well over 40 percent of the entire vote; that an additional large block of votes goes to other progressive parties, who generally support the Labor Zionists—making a clear and safe majority. A similar picture prevailed in Zionist Congress elections in Europe, especially in countries where the urge and need of immigration to Palestine was most evident.

Even in places farther removed from the centers of Zionist realization, popular instinct has always understood and respected the centrality of the Jewish worker and of his ideals in the Zionist movement. The *khalutz*, the Jew who goes back behind the plough, the swamp-drainer—this has been the general and accepted symbol of Zionism, in New York no less than in Vilna or in Jerusalem. Zionism, where it becomes deed and not aspiration, living image and not empty phrase, is necessarily centered in the worker.

If there are wings and tendencies to fragmentation in Zionism, they do not lie in the mass support of progressive Labor Zionism—for this is the center of gravity, the consensus, the centripetal nucleus of Zionism.

### ***The Record***

The single maxim which one can pick out as most essential to the doctrine of Labor Zionism is the commandment to go to Palestine to settle there. This simple rule, unflinchingly followed under all circumstances, marks out, as closely as any single criterion one might choose, those who became workers in Palestine. There were *always* pioneers and workers who trained and planned to come to Palestine. Capitalists might enter the country in waves, drawn by favorable economic junctures. Refugees, too, came in sudden streams, impelled by the change of outer conditions. The working immigration came to Palestine *steadily* ever since 1904, in good times and bad.

### ***The Crucial Beginning, 1904-1914***

The first Jewish immigrants who succeeded in establishing themselves as workmen in Palestine came in 1904, at a time of low ebb in the fortunes of Zionism. Immigration to Palestine, which had been going on sporadically since the first Russian pogroms of the 1880's was not encouraged by the rise of political Zionism in the '90's. In fact, political Zionists generally argued that actual immigration must be delayed until after the political prerequisites, in the form of a charter for large-scale development, had been obtained. By 1903, repeated failure to obtain such a charter for colonization in Palestine had brought leaders of the Zionist Organization to the point where, in desperation, Dr. Herzl welcomed the offer (subsequently found to be insubstantial) of a substitute territory in Uganda, at least as an initial stage in the project to colonize Palestine. The Zionist Congress of 1903 was sharply split on this question and the rejection of the Uganda proposal left both sides despondent. Israel Zangwill and a small group of his followers left the Zionist Congress as a result. Worn out by his few hectic years of strenuous effort and small diplomatic success as the leader of Zionism, Theodor Herzl died in July, 1904. Although he had builded better than he knew and the Zionist Organization, rooted as it was in the heritage and destiny of the Jews, was later to achieve historic victories, his death left the Zionists of Europe disorganized and dispirited.

To go to Palestine at that time, as did the founding fathers of Labor Zionism, appeared to other European Jews, Zionist or not, as sheer stupidity. The reception the new immigrants got in Palestine was even cooler. An earlier wave of immigrants, beginning over twenty years before, had also been inspired with the vision of returning to work the soil of Palestine. After years of toil, some of them had reached positions of fair economic stability—but only as plantation managers and landlords, not as workers. Moreover, the majority had become so deeply disillusioned that the permanence of the colonies which they had built stood in great doubt. The pioneer fathers were too old to leave the farms in which they had invested their lives. They could, therefore, only favor *in theory* projects for *emigration* from Palestine to other virgin territories, in which it was proposed to set up a Jewish National Home. Their sons, however, *did* in large numbers what their fathers' mood only favored: they left Palestine, if not for virgin territories proposed as places of Jewish resettlement, then for the greater opportunities of the major industrial countries, to which East European Jews were also migrating. The Jewish plantation colonies in Palestine, increasingly manned by neighboring Arab villagers, were in danger of gradual submergence.

The derision and hostility with which the new "labor" immigration (consisting of young left-wing intellectuals and ex-Talmudic scholars) was met, is understandable in the light of these conditions. There was difficulty in finding employment in Palestine even from Jewish employers. Notwithstanding these hardships, the labor immigrants continued spontaneously to come, from 1904 to the beginning of the first World War. Despite hostility they stayed as workers in the old plantation villages. And when they, too, settled in villages of their own, they established *labor* settlements in which there were no Jewish owners and Arab workers, but only workers, Jews tilling their own soil, in collective or cooperative mutuality.

What difference did this make in the history of Zionism? It made the crucial difference: it turned a trend of stagnation and decline into the beginnings of an advance which has not ceased to this day. There were many reasons why the plantation colonies faced the prospect of decline. Chief among them was the failure to create an organized Jewish community in those colonies. This

was inevitable so long as the workers were all Arab. A thin stratum of Jewish managers and landlords was bound to live in an atmosphere of boredom and nostalgia for the old *milieu* they had so bravely left behind, precisely as other white colonists on native-worked plantations long for "home." Zion could certainly not be built in this way. When Jewish labor won its fight for work in the colonies, the whole character of the situation changed. A rounded community sprang up. One of the most significant results was that spoken Hebrew, championed by the same Labor Zionist workers and by men of kindred spirit whom they found among the younger planters and planters' sons, became the living language of whole communities, instead of a cultural oddity confined to a few solitary individuals, like the famous Eliezer ben Yehudah and his family. An active, organic community life arose—with the result that these same villages which could not hold their sons, and where Argentine "territorialism" was so popular in 1904, are today outstanding in their stability and in attractions of living. Not only general observation but specific statistical studies have shown that today the attachment of the whole younger Jewish generation to their homes in Palestine, and particularly so in the villages, is extremely intense.

The rise of Labor Zionism made another crucial difference. It turned Zionism from the old, welltrodden paths of plantation colonialism, by which Zion could never have been attained, into a new road of workers' resettlement. It discovered the essentially progressive method of settlement by which alone the *social and technological frontier* which is Palestine can be mastered for the general welfare. Other old countries, from Egypt to India and China, were being "colonized" by Europeans in the nineteenth and twentieth century. Those who went there to take up the "white man's burden" did not build homes for themselves, but only residences; they were not settlers, but in essence no more than proconsular garrisons. They brought to the natives law and order and some education—but they also brought exploitation of man and of land. This type of colonialism "develops" only the most obvious and lucrative resources of a country—its oil, rubber, cotton; or its oranges and cheap manpower. Its economic are short-range and narrow, and opposed to the visionary and yet conservative notions of national economy which must rule those who would make any country their *home*. By revolting against the

colonial system of Jewish plantation owners and Arab workers, Labor Zionism opened the way for the more rounded economy and the basic *reclamation* of Palestine which we now witness; for the growth not only of orange plantations, but of dairy herds and vegetable gardening. The standards of labor they set in the Jewish economy, the higher productivity and higher wages, made possible not only the break with exploitation of Arab low-pay manpower in agriculture, but the development of small industries, with their higher paid labor, selling to the local market. As a result, the Arab wage level, both in the Jewish and Arab economy also gradually rose. Labor Zionism gave some reason, through its vision of a Jewish labor commonwealth, for large-scale swamp drainage, which could not long have been pursued by plantation colonialism. In short, it made possible the *intensive* settlement of Jews in their own land, without which Zionism would have been a mere chimaera and Palestine today only another colonial country of the Arab Mediterranean, with a thin layer of, in this case Jewish, Europeans decaying in their colonial exile. If they are today able to argue that we have brought benefits to the Arabs for exceeding the advance in neighboring countries, this became possible in great part because Zionism took the hard road of intensive settlement instead of the easy road of colonial exploitation.

As we noted, there was little sympathy for these pioneers, and little understanding of these visions, at the start. But, fortunately, a few Zionists saw and understood. Happily, a number were individuals in strategic positions. Outstanding among them was the late Arthur Ruppin. In 1908 he came to Palestine as head of the Zionist Office there. The funds at his disposal were small, but he used them in accord with the vision of intensive settlement. From the beginning, he worked hand in hand with those who strove to become Jewish workers. It was the Jewish workers, in his eyes too, who were the foundation of the structure. Despite criticism at the Zionist Congresses, he stood by the settlers of Degania and the workers of Judea. He and Zionists like him in positions of responsibility explain, in part, why the men of 1904-1914 succeeded where the men of 1882, with their idealism stifled by the misguided paternalism of the officials and agencies of that time, failed, and lapsed into the hopeless impasse of plantation colonialism.

### ***First Years of Realization, 1919-1923***

The Balfour Declaration of November 2, 1917 gave Jews the political charter for colonization which had been the goal of political Zionism since Herzl. Enthusiasm was great in every Jewish community the world over; but it was the Labor Zionist immigrants, and not others, who began to stream into the country at the first opportunity. They came, despite obstacles and discouragement, in a great trek across still war-torn frontiers. In Palestine, soon after its conquest by British forces, a military government was in occupation. Not only was the occupation force doubtful whether it had legal authority to put the Balfour Declaration into effect, but its officers were generally opposed to Zionism, which they regarded as a hindrance to the Pro-Arab policy they favored for Palestine. Naturally, therefore, they did not encourage immigration.

But even the Zionist Organization, for some time after the war, tried to dampen the ardor for immigration among the Labor groups. Great plans for large development funds, which had been envisioned by Herzl and his successors, materialized in miniature only. The finances of the Zionist Organization long remained far below not only the original rosy expectations, but even the minimum necessary for any considerable resettlement plan. As a result, Zionist offices firmly opposed immediate immigration after the war. But the labor immigration disregarded these as well as other obstacles and streamed into the country by any way they could improvise.

The pioneers of 1904 had come individually, spontaneously without any very clear plans, except the determination to become and remain workers. By 1919 Labor Zionism had given shape in the Diaspora to its most characteristic organization—Hekhalutz (The Pioneer). Created by the idolized Joseph Trumpeldor, this organization gave form and purpose to the whole labor immigration into Palestine from that day to this. Labor immigration to Palestine after World War I was organized, trained, selected while still abroad. When it came to Palestine, it entered into a framework of pioneering which Labor Zionists had already set up: the Labor farm settlement, the collective organization of Jewish hired farm workers.

But above all it came trained in a tradition of *adaptability*, of being prepared, as laborers, to take on whatever work or new

projects conditions might require, or rather, suggest. For the Jewish laborer in Palestine did not think it his duty only to serve in projects which others would invent. Nor did he think his social pioneering was completed with the creation of Degania\* and Nahalal.\*\* Trumpeldor and his disciples in Hekhalutz dreamed of vast projects of collective enterprise, to be carried out by a labor army in every field of agriculture, industry, construction, and transport: projects whose outline is still being filled out by Labor Zionism in Palestine today.

When they came to Palestine they found two main fields of activity in which to engage. The Jewish National Fund, under the leadership of M. M. Ussischkin, had just made its bold purchases in the Jezreel valley. The new settlers, together with veterans from 1904-14 immigration, were fortunately available to drain its swamps and settle its broad lands. They had not only the will but also the essential forms of organization, the collective and the cooperative farm settlement, to undertake the difficult pioneer assignment of settling the Emek. They had no funds, and the Zionist Organization was not prepared to grub-stake them adequately. The methods of farming suitable for this region, where grains and dairy farming rather than plantations were called for, had not been fully worked out. The new settlers themselves had to be the experimenters, aided by the researches of experts in the Zionist experiment stations. But they did not shirk the difficulties or the uncertainties of the task. Their initial hardships paved the way for the present diversified and intensive agriculture of Palestine.

The other main field open to Jewish laborers then was road construction, begun under the military occupation regime. There were few, if any, experienced road builders among the *khalutzim* (pioneers) then. But, trained to be adaptable and ready for any task, the young men and women entered into their work with their characteristic vigor and spirit. They organized as mobile collective working groups, moving along with the construction camp as the work progressed. The forms of mutual aid and cooperation developed in these camps had a vital importance in helping the young Jews adjust to the new situation. This was fortun-

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\* The first communal settlement.

\*\* The first cooperative settlement.

ately understood by such Zionist engineers as Pinkhas Rutenberg, who were open-minded enough to see the practical value of these methods and ignore complaints about "Socialist experiments."

The principles of organization of these units of the *G'dud Avodah* (Labor Legion), as the collective working groups were called, later found new application when large scale immigration of unskilled refugee labor in the late 1930's had to be absorbed. They will certainly be resorted to once more to absorb the great influx of penniless, unskilled workers we now expect in Palestine. Labor Zionist veterans will certainly have to be relied on primarily in applying these principles of mutual aid and collective organization by which the new mass immigration can be productively employed in a short time, while obtaining a maximum of social care and general retraining.

Thus, although the Zionist Organization as such was woefully behind-hand in planning to take advantage of the Balfour Declaration, nor did it have adequate resources for that purpose, the pioneer spirit of the Zionist workers, aided by the understanding and support of a few leading Zionist officers in Palestine, pushed forward the work. The Jezreel Valley was reclaimed and settled, the roads were built—and in the process the immigrants acquired new skills and began to learn new methods (both technical and social) suitable for the unprecedented task of restoring a worn-out land and releasing the energies of a suppressed people.

### ***Boom, Depression, Recovery, 1924-1931***

It was not until 1924 that a considerable influx of non-labor immigrants came to Palestine. By that time, after several years of British civilian rule and the formal adoption of the Mandate, the economic potentialities discovered by four decades of Jewish resettlement effort had matured and become visible. Moreover, economic difficulties and the beginnings of nationalist anti-Semitism in Poland and the other new countries of Eastern Europe, stimulated a wave of Jewish migration; and the new immigration restrictions in the United States helped to channel Jewish immigrants and capital imports towards Palestine. Some of the newcomers invested capital wisely and productively in the upbuilding of the country, particularly in orange groves. Others plunged into an

orgy of real estate speculation, which collapsed after a year or two. As a result, a backflow of emigrants ensued, which in 1927 more than cancelled out the immigration.

While this migration cycle, the so-called Fourth Aliyah, is generally regarded as a period of capitalist immigration, it, of course, contained a large proportion of labor immigrants. It, therefore, confronted the Zionist workers with both problems and opportunities. Most of the laborers needed for the road construction and house-building boom of that time were trained on the job by Solel Boneh, a country-wide labor contracting bureau organized by the Federation of Jewish Workers, the Histadrut, which itself had only been founded a few years earlier. Beginning with a veteran nucleus of the members of the Labor Legion of a year or two earlier who did not go into the new agricultural settlements, Solel Boneh provided training and employment for large numbers of the incoming labor immigrants.

In the crisis which followed the years of feverish real estate speculation in Palestine, Solel Boneh was one of the casualties. Like other building contractors it had extended credit to clients, and could not recover its capital. As a result, the Histadrut reorganized its contracting bureaus on a local basis. But Solel Boneh left behind a force of skilled artisans whom it had trained in all construction and building trades. Some branched out into other urban trades, for instance the large bus cooperatives of the Histadrut. Solel Boneh also left a tradition of labor contracting bureaus, which combined the advantages of giving more regular employment in a very uncertain trade, and of serving, in times of large immigration, to absorb and retrain labor. Renewed in the last 1930's as a country-wide building contractor, Solel Boneh is today the outstanding company in the field of building and road construction, as well as in the building material industry.

During the boom of 1924-5, Palestine experienced the last of a series of speculative flurries in plantation industries. The Jewish settlers had already learned by trial and error the possibilities and the limitations of vineyards and almond groves, not to speak of silkworms, cotton, sugar cane, etc., as single-crop ventures in Palestine. Now a fever of tobacco planting set in, drawing laborers to the plantation villages. It quickly collapsed, adding to the difficulties caused by the real estate boom. But in the subsequent

years, the plantation industry at last found its feet through the development of citriculture.

Despite the difficulties of the depression period, which made more Jews leave Palestine in 1927 than entered, the Jewish settlement at that time had reached such a stage of maturity as to make possible its subsequent extraordinary rise. The years of groping in horticulture had ended by selecting the right product—the Jaffa orange—and the right methods of cultivation for Palestine's climatic and economic conditions. In the field of mixed farming, the labor settlements, having drained the swamps, had laid firm beginnings. The basic industrial equipment of Palestine—roads, electric power stations, the Portland cement and other building materials factories—was well on the way to reaching a satisfactory level. In all of these, the Jewish workers had contributed greatly, and were prepared to make further contributions.

But in the wake of the business crisis of those years, a mood of timidity and skepticism swept the Zionist Organization. The administration no longer extended the same degree of cooperation to labor initiative as in previous years, when the Labor Legion and Solel Boneh, the various settlement groups and the newly organized Workers' Bank, all were given generous contracts for work or were grubstaked, within the limits of the meager budget available. Negotiations were being conducted at that time for creating the extended Jewish Agency, including non-Zionists. It was hoped in this way to escape from the chronic fiscal difficulties of the Zionist Organization. The voices which had long been heard at Zionist Congresses in opposition to the "socialist experiments" represented by the labor settlements found a ready echo in the banking and brokerage ranks of non-Zionists. This skepticism was strongly featured in the Reports of the Experts sent in 1927 to study the ground before the non-Zionists entered the Jewish Agency. During this period of crisis, therefore, labor groups found very little readiness on the part of the Zionist Organization to advance investment capital for new ventures. There was, instead, the bitterly resented offer to provide small amounts of relief in the way of the dole.

It was just at this time that Labor Zionism undertook one of its more significant ventures. As we noted, the first labor immigration settled as workers in the plantation villages. Their original

plan was to remain hired workers, and it was only after considerable hesitation that a large part decided later to enter a new field—independent labor settlement. By 1927, in the midst of the crisis, labor settlements had sprung up in the Sea of Galilee-Jordan Valley section and in the Plain of Jezreel. Having passed through a difficult period of agricultural experimentation, their financial situation was not brilliant, but they were firmly and stably adjusted to the country and knew its requirements. They were ready to grow. However, a new beginning was called for in the old coastal villages, where Labor Zionists had first pioneered as hired farm workers. After the various booms and crises in viniculture, almond growing, and tobacco, the Jewish planters settled down to cultivate the Jaffa orange and began the great rise in that industry. Jewish labor was called upon (or rather, *felt itself* called upon, for the planters were quite prepared to do without Jewish workmen, particularly for seasonal work) to settle in greater numbers in the plantation zone. But now, after years of experience with the ruinous effects of living as a hired laborer in competition with Arabs for whom this was merely a source of supplementary income, Jewish settlers wished to go at the problem in a different way. They wished to found independent labor settlements in the plantation zone, which would supply hired labor to the planters but at the same time would build up labor villages, on the model of the collectives and cooperatives of Galilee and the Jezreel Valley.

As we noted, this was a period of retrenchment in the Zionist Organization, and there was no money available for new settlement. The laborers supplied their own capital (by skimping on food) out of savings, and took loans from banks, notably the Workers' Bank. The Jewish National Fund had no money, either; so the settlers agreed to advance funds on land purchases, which became Jewish National Fund property. Only when the extended Jewish Agency was founded in 1929 did Jewish public funds become available for new investment. Even then it was the relatively small sum collected by the Emergency Fund to rebuild the havoc of the 1929 Arab massacre, out of which capital was set aside to aid in the permanent settlement of One Thousand Families, who by their own efforts had planted their stakes in the soil.

Only in the 1930's, after Labor Zionists had attained important posts in the Zionist Organization and Jewish Agency Execu-

tive (including that of the Treasury) was the long-standing Zionist deficit wiped out by a consolidation loan from Lloyds of London, and funds made available for new settlement under the Jewish Agency. Labor Zionists had in the meantime continued the resettlement work without such aid.

### ***Refugee Immigration, 1932 and After***

The immigration which followed Hitler's rise to power occurred in the period when the Labor bloc, firmly organized as an economic and colonizing force in the Histadrut, also bore leading responsibilities in the Executives of the Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency. It was during this period that Jewish Palestine faced its most severe trials, both economically and politically, and accomplished its great triumphs. A huge refugee immigration, not coming to Palestine by choice but driven by oppression, was successfully absorbed. The new immigrants, far from remaining a passive element, were enabled, with Jewish Agency encouragement, to help in bringing to Palestine a new industrial development, which later was of extraordinary importance as a basis for Palestine's war effort.

Superficially, it would appear that the new refugee immigration, in its successful adjustment, had swamped the pioneering, labor, agricultural element. This impression may be strengthened by a survey of immigration statistics. In the years from 1932 to the war, Palestine obtained a large capital import together with its refugee immigration. The sums brought in remained well below the capital brought to England and the United States by German Jews, but in Palestinian terms they were substantial. The former great predominance of young labor immigrants was lessened, with the immigration of dependents and relatives, unaccompanied children and middle-aged refugees. Even in the labor category, the share of Hekhalutz in immigration certificates dropped from 83 percent in 1930, to 43.4 percent in 1933, and 39.7 percent in 1935.

Yet, a closer analysis reveals that the "refugee" immigration of the period after 1932 was far from representing a complete departure from the paths laid down by earlier pioneers. In fact, the German Jews and other new immigrants profited remarkably well

by the example of their forerunners. Their creative adjustment to patterns laid down by Labor Zionism is one of the keys to the successful absorption of the "New Aliyah," while the direct aid of Labor was also a factor of the highest importance.

First of all, the German Jewish immigration did *not* reverse the earlier Palestinian pattern of a back-to-the-land movement. About a quarter of the German Jewish immigrants settled on the land, a substantial part of them in the collective labor settlements. This proportion is no less than that of any other large group of immigrants. If the German Jewish immigration to Palestine was not only absorbed but fitted into the creative pattern of pioneering, two factors are responsible: first, the activity of old-line German Zionists; and second, the work of Hekhalutz. Within a year and a half, the pioneer youth movement in Germany grew from 500 to 15,000 members as of September, 1934. A year later there were 28,000 members, half over eighteen years of age and eligible for labor certificates. At that time Hekhalutz had a quarter of a million members in its youth movement the world over, and about 100,000 over eighteen years of age awaiting immigration. The German Hekhalutz was among the largest branches.

The German Jews founded what are now called the "middle-class" settlements in Jewish agriculture. With certain changes made possible by the larger capital available to the settlers or made necessary by their more advanced age, the middle-class settlements were patterned after the models of mixed farming developed by the labor settlements.

But perhaps the most striking contribution of Labor Zionism to the adjustment of the "New Aliyah" was its outstanding share in the success of the Youth Aliyah. The original idea of Youth Aliyah was developed by a German Jewish woman, Recha Freyer, who had seen the labor settlements in Palestine and regarded them as ideal places for the reception of orphans and other Jewish children who would have to be transferred from oppressed Europe to a new asylum. She, in cooperation with representatives of Hekhalutz in Germany, made the first experiments in this great venture by sending groups of children to labor settlements for education and care. The plan came under the wise administration of Henrietta Szold and the sponsorship of the Jewish Agency, with the financial support, in the United States, of Hadassah. The actual site of reception and training for refugee children, in addition to

a number of schools and special institutions, remained the labor settlements, notably the collectives. Under Miss Szold's understanding supervision, the collectives were freely drawn upon in providing both the personnel and the methods of training for refugee children. The success of the venture has been universally acknowledged. For Zionists it is attested above all by the fact that three-fourths of the original Youth Aliyah children became farm settlers, and from their ranks came a large part of the pioneers who, in the days of Arab terrorism and in the war period, founded new outpost settlements.

The labor settlements were able to accomplish this work so admirably because from early times education had been no less their task than colonization. They developed enlightened, progressive methods of education for their own children. But beyond this, they always set themselves the task of training new immigrants who wished to become agricultural workers and settlers in Palestine. Attention to workers' training as a major Labor Zionist responsibility is, indeed, a striking characteristic of the whole Histadrut, as we noticed specifically in the case of Solel Boneh. It reaches a peak of intensity in the case of the collective settlements. It is their members who go out to the Diaspora to train khalutzim even before immigration. In Palestine, moreover, the collectives always served as the site of a first stage of training for groups of khalutzim who wished to form new settlements. Members of the collectives, also, went out to give expert guidance for a period of years to those new settlements, once established.

It is only natural, therefore, that whenever problems arose in receiving immigrants *without capital* or needing *care and training*, it was the labor settlements who were chiefly relied upon. It was true of the Youth Aliyah; it was true also, when other refugee immigrants began to come in without capital—without proper clothing, even. It is a striking fact that in the last years before the war, when "illegal" immigrants began to arrive, it was the *labor settlements* who absorbed a proportion of them far out of line with their size and ratio to the whole Jewish population. The same was true, during the war, of the Turkish, Syrian, and Iraqi immigrants, including children, who came to Palestine.

During the years after 1936 the Jewish community in Palestine was submitted to a series of grueling *military* tests of its will and

capacity to survive. Everyone knows how brilliantly the Yishuv met those tests. In the 1936-39 riots the Yishuv not only defended its lines without retreating from a single point, but it expanded the area of Jewish settlement—and this, while refraining from aggressive violence in spite of attack. During the second World War, Palestine Jewry contributed in armed units a share comparable to other countries where conscription was in force—and this by the sheer moral power of a communal sense of duty. While it should not be new information to any Zionist, it is still in place to remark that the core and greater part of the body of the volunteer forces which saved the Yishuv in 1936-39, fought for all Jewry in the second World War, and is still in the line of fire in the Haganah—are the Zionist workers.

The record of Zionist labor regarding self-defense goes back to the beginnings of the resettlement in Palestine, and even beyond that to the first groups who resisted pogroms in Gomel, in Czarist Russia. It was the Zionist workers who founded Hashomer, the organization of Jewish guardsmen in Palestine; and it was they who stood and died with Trumpeldor at Tel Khai. The record of Zionist labor was particularly bright during the 1936-39 uprisings.

There were two great collective heroes of those days. The first were the Jewish busmen and truck drivers, most of them members of the labor transport cooperatives, who kept the lines of supply open between town and country. The others were the men and women who lived and worked on the front line itself—the members of the agricultural settlements, largely labor settlements. This fact was plainly recognized by the rest of the Yishuv, which imposed upon itself the tax called *Kofer ha-Yishuv*: a term for which there is no adequate English equivalent, but which signifies a payment, by which all those not in the front-lines redeem themselves from the reproach of living in safety by lending financial support to their protectors. With the proceeds of this tax, additional guards were mobilized to go to the farms and allow the workers there to rest from day and night duty.

The policy of *havlagah*, or self-restraint and non-retaliation, has been made a reproach to the Zionist workers by some critics who love more the appearance than the substance of heroism. We do not wish to debate this long-dead "issue"; but it is necessary to dispel one misconception about the policy which still persists.

*Havlagah* did not mean a passive, merely defensive position in "prepared positions." As a matter of fact, the Yishuv expanded geographically to a remarkable extent during those years. New settlements were established at a greater rate than ever before; and they were established with a definite two-fold strategic aim, not only "military" but political. First of all, new settlements were thrown into the breach in every danger spot of the Yishuv whence Arab attacks came. Secondly, the new settlements were placed in every area, far removed from the old Jewish settlements, which it was thought might be eliminated from the zone open to Jewish colonization in anticipated partition proposals. Not only were isolated strips of unoccupied Jewish National Fund land protected from squatters' incursions in this way; Zionism also asserted its right to extensive reserve zones which had hardly yet been touched by resettlement—the Galilee, the Beisan Valley, and the Negev. All this came under the head of *havlagah*; obviously only fools could condemn as cowardice a policy which, refraining from meaningless reprisals and non-essential forays, placed its soldiers far behind "enemy lines" to control, at the daily risk of their lives, essential gains.

It was not only the Labor Zionists who comprised these outpost settlements. We had come a long way from the 1920's when Zionist Congresses rang with denunciations of Rupin's granting aid to socialist "experiments." In 1936-39, not only labor but every section of the Zionist movement sent its best youth into collective and cooperative colonies established on the outposts of Jewish settlement. The collective and cooperative labor group was the recognized pattern for any pioneer enterprise, accepted as such by every branch of the Zionist movement. Yet, notwithstanding the participation of other Zionist groups in outpost pioneering, it was of course Labor Zionism which continued to supply, as it had in the past, the bulk of the khalutzim. It supplied them not only from Europe, but also (and, for a considerable time predominantly) from among Palestinian youth—both country and city-bred—and from among the Youth Aliyah graduates.

What Zionist labor contributed to Palestine Jewry's war effort also needs no long description. We Zionists justly take pride in the fact that on a voluntary enlistment basis the Yishuv contributed as great a proportion of soldiers against Hitler as did other coun-

tries by conscription. It is in place to remark that if not for the altogether disproportionate enlistment of Zionist workers, and above all of the members of the collectives, we could not make the proud boast. It was the collectives that gave us Enzo Sereni, Hannah Szenes, and the other parachutists. They, too, were disproportionately represented among emissaries to Hekhalutz in Europe, who stayed in Nazi-occupied zones and organized Jewish rescue and resistance work there. It is their men, finally, who still assume major responsibility for every effort of the Haganah, whether of defense in Palestine or of "illegal" immigration from the Diaspora.

Great as was the proportional contribution of the Yishuv, both in the Allied war effort and the wartime and post-war Jewish rescue efforts, it was possible only because of the far, far greater proportionate contribution of the collectives and other Labor Zionist groups. There are obvious and partial explanations for the sacrificial readiness of the collectives. Based as they are upon a labor pool, any single member can easily be detached for public service without damaging the whole economy to the same extent as in an individually operated enterprise. But this does not explain the *individual* readiness of members of collectives to enlist, to drop behind the Nazi lines as parachutists on missions of rescue. The collectives, and the Histadrut generally, not only provide the objective possibility of public service; they foster the spirit of the khalutzim.

### *The Tasks of Tomorrow*

As this is written, we stand in the midst of a desperate struggle to implement, with virtually no help from the outside world, a UN decision for the partition of Palestine and the establishment of a Jewish State. Arab assaults and British sabotage, so far unopposed by the UN or any of its members, are directed against two exposed sections of the Yishuv—the old pre-Zionist communities in the mixed cities like Jerusalem and Safed, or the poorer Jewish quarters on the Jaffa-Tel Aviv boundary, and the newest outpost workers' settlements in the Galilee and the Negev. Among the Jewish defenders, unfortunately, only the Haganah with its solid core of worker-fighters is a disciplined and reliable force. The dissident armed groups, Irgun Tzvai Leumi and the Stern group, continue, while negotiating for a basis of unification, to carry out actions

which are often irrelevant to the situation and sometimes downright injurious—but always irresponsible. Thus once again the Labor Zionist groups stand in the forefront of the danger and shoulder the brunt of the work.

The day of acute peril will pass, but not in the foreseeable future will Zionism have to deal with simple and easy tasks which will permit us to relax our efforts. Upon the establishment of the Jewish State, we will stand face to face with the stupendous problem of accommodating and absorbing into a stable Jewish community the first large segment of the survivors of Hitler. Thereafter, for ten years there will be a heavy influx of refugee immigrants from Europe and the Orient. The difficulties are manifold: no capital accompanies these immigrants; a large proportion will be fatherless or motherless children, battered by the cruelties of inhuman Nazi oppressors; many of the adults will be broken in health, haunted by the suspicions and fears of the concentration camp. It is our task not only to make these people "normal"; it is our great goal to make these people creative Jews, in the tradition of the pioneers of the past sixty years.

Just as Labor Zionism has provided the forms and models whereby this problem can be rightly approached, so the Zionist workers will necessarily again have to bear the main burden and show the chief initiative in solving it.

This will certainly be true of the immediate problem. The experience of the recent past has shown that whenever a mass of immigrants without capital arrived in Palestine, the labor settlements were always called upon before all others to stretch their supplies of food, clothing, and shelter in order to provide for the newcomers. If, as expected, 15,000 to 25,000 of the first 75,000 immigrants are children, the Youth Aliyah administration will take care of them, and the labor settlements again will be called upon to make a generous contribution of facilities and personnel. The healing qualities of the very atmosphere and institutions of the labor settlements have been shown in the past to be so effective a therapy for the wounds of the unwanted Jew, both adult and child, that every effort should and undoubtedly will be made to apply them to the utmost extent.

But beyond the contributions of the labor settlements, Histadrut institutions generally will play a role of outstanding signi-

ficance in sheer medical (including dental) care. The situation of Jewish medical services in Palestine is not fully appreciated by most American Zionists. We are aware of the pioneering work in Palestine medicine done by Hadassah and the Joint Distribution Committee in early years, and continued by Hadassah until today. We are not aware, however, that it has quite properly been Hadassah's policy to shift a growing share of the responsibility and burden of medical care onto the Palestine Yishuv itself, and to devote Hadassah funds increasingly to medical research, education, and the major hospital. Hadassah, as a result, long ago ceased to be the foremost source of medical care in Palestine. Chief among those who have taken up the responsibility and the burden is the Histadrut. Kupat Kholim, the Histadrut's system of medical and dental care, is the major factor in the Yishuv's public health system, caring for over a third of the population. Its clinics and workers penetrate into every remote outpost of the settlement. It is they who accompany new settlers into the Negev. It is they who will have the foremost responsibility for the rehabilitation and care of the incoming immigrants.

It is obvious that the first employment of a good part of the able-bodied among the immigrants will be in construction projects. The methods of organization of these workers will surely be drawn from the experience of Zionist labor, stretching from the post-World War I Labor Legion to the cooperative labor camps of the late 1930's. Histadrut personnel will have to be used not only to instruct the new workers in their new occupations, but to organize them socially in accordance with the successful patterns of Labor Zionist work camps of the past, so that they will find their place in the succession of creative pioneering. In the vast and intricate machinery of Solel Boneh, the Histadrut's building contractor, with its building materials factories and its proven expertness in all fields of construction work, the new immigrants will find their chief support and guidance in retraining.

For the permanent absorption of these and later immigrants, an imaginative program of intensified land use and large scale land reclamation will have to be carried out.

It is the pioneers of the labor settlements who are now engaged, in all the far-off frontier settlements, in working out the experiments which will determine the success or failure of these

projects. They have set up their stockades and tents in the stony hills, and are shaping in the sweat of their toil the methods of hill cultivation: stones and stumps laboriously removed, terraces rebuilt, new plantations tried and developed. They have built their homes on the sea-side sand dunes, where they are learning to combine fishing and other maritime trades with agriculture and industry as a basis for settlement. They have driven their stakes into the hardpan of the blasted Dead Sea area, and in the midst of its infernal heat and salt-deadened wastes, they are learning to cleanse the soil of its fatal salinity and remove the curse of barrenness from this age-old wilderness. They have sent small pre-settlements groups into the Negev, to find water, to experiment with dams for storing flood rains. If we succeed in the next decade in making fruitful these "uncultivable" portions of Palestine for the settlement of the 250,000 DP's and their successors, it will be the indomitable devotion of the Zionist workers which will have achieved it.

There is still a vast margin for increased productivity in those portions of Palestine already settled. The hope for new settlement here lies in irrigation. There is sufficient water; this is well known. But if the water is to be used to the full measure of its potentialities, the first essential will be a strong public control of land and water use, extending both to Jews and Arabs. Any assertion of private over general interests in water rights will make enormously more difficult the full intensification of agriculture by irrigation. Any refusal, by Jews no less than by Arabs, to give up sections of land to new settlers when irrigation makes less land necessary, will retard the absorption of Jewish immigrants.

That such obstruction even by private Jewish interests is possible has been shown by experience. There have been cases where water was discovered in abundance near Jewish settlements, and the settlers to whose private possession the land had been entrusted by a colonization agency created difficulties about reallocating the land in smaller parcels for more intensive cultivation in order to make possible the absorption of additional settlers. There is a clause in every Jewish National Fund lease-hold reserving the right the the JNF to reduce the individual holdings if more intensive use becomes possible. Yet it is not enough for such a contractual right to be reserved. For a smooth transition to a more intensified system of land use under irrigation, the J.N.F. must be able to rely

on the full cooperation of its settlers. The forms of farm settlement developed by Jewish labor, the collectives and cooperatives, with their strong group discipline and high devotion to the tasks of absorbing new immigrants by intensive land settlement, give the best guarantee that the necessary measures will find support among the old settlers. In fact, such reparcellation for more intensive use has already been successfully carried out in zones of labor settlement.

Not only will the collectives and cooperatives have to be relied upon strongly for the successful functioning of the intensification plan among Jews, the labor settlements will also be the mainstay of any effort to smooth the way of such a program among the Arabs. British administrative experience, not only in Palestine but also in neighboring areas, has had extremely poor success in attempting to induce Arabs to adopt more advanced ways of cultivation or to participate in advantageous resettlement projects. Yet the Arab is not immune to the influences of progress. It is only that bureaucratic methods of raising Arab standards fail. In the vicinity of Jewish settlements, and stimulated by the Jewish example, Arab farmers have demonstrated quite remarkable advances. It is essential for any large scale plan of intensifying and nationalizing Palestine's land and water use that such advances should be sharply increased. For this, the labor settlements will have to be our main reliance, in their neighborly influence; for powers to take land by right of eminent domain alone cannot guarantee that smooth working of the scheme which is a prerequisite of great importance. It is well known that the real promise of greater good will between Jew and Arab lies first of all in the relations between the farmers and laborers of both communities, as it is there that the good feeling which already exists has been chiefly manifested.

A vitally important part of Palestine Jewry's future growth lies in the development of industry. The Histadrut has a role of crucial importance in the field. We have referred briefly to the Histadrut's own share in industry, chiefly in relation to Solef Boneh. A complete survey of all the Histadrut's independent contributions to industrial production—through construction industries, transport, labor housing, and other goes beyond the scope

of this survey.\* Suffice it to say that in all these and similar fields Labor Zionism has even greater responsibilities which it must shoulder in the future.

In the main, however, the Histadrut will perhaps be of greatest importance to industrial production by supplying manpower and skills, by increasing productivity. The Histadrut has long taken a leading position in vocational education in Palestine. When the diamond industry came to Palestine, it was the Histadrut which trained most of the skilled workers. This has been the case in innumerable trades and will continue to be so in the future.

There is much talk today about raising productivity or even directly reducing production costs in Palestine industry, including wages. It is the Histadrut which is expected to help bring this about for the sake of economic expansion and absorption of immigrants.

Thus, we see that in every field vital for the future of Palestine resettlement, labor will have to assume responsibilities, shoulder burdens, and even, it may be, make exceptional sacrifices for the success of the whole venture. Labor has cheerfully done these things in the past, and will unquestionably do so in the future—and perhaps in greater measure, if possible, should the greater urgency and the greater scope of future tasks demand.

Throughout its history, Labor Zionism has been able to rely upon the support, in a greater or lesser degree, of Zionists and for that matter, non-Zionists in the Diaspora. The magnitude and importance of the tasks undertaken by the Jewish workers on behalf of the coming Jewish State and on behalf of the rescue of the Jewish people elicited such support, as well as their cordial admiration, even from ideological “opponents.” In the future, too, Labor Zionism will be aided in generous measure not only by all kinds of Zionists, but by all kinds of Jews, of whatever ideology, because the tasks they assume are the great necessities of the hour for the Jewish people.

But it is also true that the aid which was forthcoming has never been adequate in view of the immense scope of the work under-

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\* See the books of Gerhard Muenzner.

taken, let alone the work which was needed. And in view of the far greater needs of the future, it is to be expected that support will again fall short of needs. In this situation it has been true in the past, and will be true in the future, that implicit *understanding* of the mood and ideas of the workers' movement in Palestine, even when it is coupled with limited resources, may be far more important in an emergency than a lagging or recalcitrant understanding coupled with large (even though not entirely adequate) resources.

For such implicit understanding, the Palestine workers rely on the Labor Zionist Organization of America—Poale Zion and its affiliated bodies. Its youth organization, *Habonim*, stands foremost among those who sent not only means but *men* to Palestine from America. Its women's organization, the Pioneer Women's Organization, supports the vital activities of the Working Women's Council of the Histadrut. Its fund-raising arm, the National Committee for Labor Palestine, supplies monetary support directly to the most strategic center of Palestine upbuilding, the Histadrut. Its fraternal order, the Jewish National Workers' Alliance stands with the LZOA-Poale Zion in support of all the educational, political, and fund-raising efforts on behalf of Labor Zionism; as of Zionism and the American Jewish community generally, through such institutions as the United Jewish Appeal, the American Jewish Conference, etc. In American Zionism, with all its varied activities, this Labor Zionist camp is relied upon by the most representative group in the Yishuv to make effectively heard the views and instinctive reactions of *essential Zionism* in moments of crisis or emergency.

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