Prefatory comment:

Dear colleagues and workshop participants,

The following is a very rough draft of a chapter I am currently preparing for a forthcoming volume on *Radical Jewish Politics* (tentative title), edited by Alma Rachel Heckman, Nathaniell Deutsch and TonyMichels. While most of the chapters in the volume would revisit the relatively well-researched topic of Jews and the Left, I decided to take the road less traveled, and examine the intellectual world of pre-independence maximalist Revisionism.

I presented my key arguments in the introductory section, while each of the following 3 sections examines a different Revisionist point-of-reference or “fantasy”. Section 3 in particular, dealing with the Revisionist views of Ireland and the Sinn Féin, is an active construction zone. *Please accept my sincere apologies for sharing a half-baked work with you!* However, I am very much looking forward to hearing if you found the main thesis convincing, if you think I have omitted crucial secondary literature, or have suggestions as to additional sources that will help me as I pursue this project.

Abstract

This paper seeks to revisit the history of interwar Jewish right-wing radicalism, and locate it within a larger twentieth century ideological context. Moving away from the “father-figure” Vladimir Jabotinsky to the ranks and files of the Revisionist movement, it focuses on the splinter groups of intellectual-warriors and the ways in which they forged new language and poetics of struggle. The paper argues that this new radical language cannot be understood in a Palestino-centric context alone, that is as an outcome of local development divorced from a larger contemporaneous European and British imperial context. Indeed, much of the new language was a product of borrowing from other contexts and an analogous imagination, by which I refer to rhetorical gestures that allowed its carriers to position themselves in parallel to radicals elsewhere.

Section I focuses on the self-described radical avant-garde group known as “Brit Habiryonim” (“The Zealots' Alliance”) – a trio that was composed by the essayist and activist Abba Ahimeir (born Abba Shaul ben Isaac Gaiassinovitch; 1897-1962), the modernist poet Uri Zvi Greenberg (1896–1981), and the journalist and translator Yehoshua (Joshua) Heschel Yevin (1891–1970). Section II looks at the Italian members of Betar such as Isacco (Yitzhak) Sciaky (1896-1979) and Leone Carpi (1887-1964), as well as the colorful Yirmiyahu (“Irma”) Halpern (1901-1962), who worked in Italy and provided crucial personal and ideological bridges connecting Palestine’s radicals with the Italian fascists. Section III shows how, alongside Bolshevist revolutionary zeal and Italian fascism, radical Revisionist began seeing themselves in comparison to the Irish republicans and sought to develop a local version of the Sinn Féin language, emphasizing self-standing and an uncompromisingly anti-British language. Tracing this rhetoric of comparison, I argue, not only reflects but also captures the essence of the wholesale transformation of pre-1948 Zionist Revisionism, that abandoned the liberal imperial stance that characterized it initially, and replaced it during the 1930s and 1940s with a combination of fascism and anti-colonial terror.
Right-wing Zionist Radicalism and the Politics of the Comparative Gaze: A look at Three Revisionist Fantasies*

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Introduction

Whether it is because we are fond of writing the histories of underdogs and struggles for lost causes, or because a certain academic bias pushes us to associate theoretical sophistication with left-to-center dissident thinkers and revolutionaries, our understanding of Right-wing radicalism remains lacking and insufficient. It is easy to fall prey to the self-congratulatory romanticism of the Left. Yet aesthetic and scholarly refinement do not travel in one direction: next to the unyielding anti-fascists Pablo Neruda or W. H. Auden one could always find an Ezra Pound or a Hilaire Belloc, a Louis-Ferdinand Céline against every George Orwell, a Gabriele D'Annunzio to counter any Vladimir Mayakovsky. Dismissing Right-wing thought as an unsophisticated obscures its political and intellectual radicalism. It ignores the modern Right’s own links to the Jacobin style of modern politics and its self-conception as guardian and active promoter of a theoretically sound, systematic weltanschauung. It misses, as George L. Mosse realized many years ago, the Right’s strong appeal and its remarkable ability to

* This paper grew out of the workshop “Radical Jewish Politics,” at the University of California, Santa Cruz, May 24-25, 2017. I would like to thank Mr. Matteo Quadrifoglio for his assistance in tracking down Italian sources and making them available to me, and the participants of the workshop for their comments and suggestions.

harness “a religious enthusiasm to secular government,” to channel old fervor to create a modern political myth.²

Twentieth century Jewish and Hebrew Right wing radicals are not different in that respect. “Maximalist” Revisionist Zionists, who chose the path of open confrontation and military struggle with both Palestinian-Arabs and the British mandatory forces, were often the brightest intellectual stars shining in the Yishuv (the pre-statehood Jewish community of Palestine). Unlike the Labor Zionist “Sabra” ideal, that injected a considerable degree of anti-intellectualism into the notion that Zionism will bring to life a new breed of virile, fearless Jews, the Revisionist Sittlichkeit was modeled on the examples of Gabriele D’Annunzio and Vladimir (Ze’ev) Jabotinsky, who sought to combine the refined poet with the daring warrior. Their poetry can be (and was) disdained as dubious and their politics oversimplified, yet it should first be understood in its own terms. They participated in a European illiberal and anti-liberal wave, developing their own modernist, heterogeneous political thought and poetic imagination that was modeled upon and adapted to their own local predicaments. By doing so, they donated much new vocabulary to the relatively slim glossary of Jewish political terms existing at the time.

In what follows, I wish to revisit the prehistory of the Israeli Right and to reassess and scrutinize several truisms regarding its intellectual genealogy. Moving beyond the endless debates about what Jabotinsky, the founding-father figure of the movement, might have had in mind, I shift our attention to the next generation of Revisionist Zionists, the disciples-turned-contenders. They are the ones who pushed the movement in an increasingly radical direction, during Jabotinsky’s lifetime and after his death (1940); and more than Jabotinsky, these splinter groups of intellectual-warriors were the ones to provide the language, imagery and poetics of struggle pushing the movement in the direction of fascism and anti-colonial terror. Second, and more specifically, my aim is to shed light on the way in which processes of ideological radicalization involved what we might refer to as a “remix” – an eclectic borrowing of ideas, sensibilities, political

vocabulary and programs that were put forward elsewhere, in different European contexts, that were creatively meshed together with Jewish messianic idioms and adapted to meet Mandatory Palestine’s unique political situation.

To be sure, I am not the first to examine the drift of the new, more radical and outspoken generation of Revisionists towards radical politics. The subject has been studied by at least two generations of scholars, and fascinated numerous popular histories of insurgency and counterinsurgency in Palestine. Building off this rich scholarship, I propose reading the maximalist tilt against the backdrop of a rise of a comparativist political imagination, whereby Revisionist openly equated their position with that of others, and built off creatively of political programs launched by others. Put otherwise: I use the tools of intellectual history – echoing Donald Kelly’s suggestion that every so often, history of ideas can be read as a form of principled eclecticism – to read Right wing Jewish radicalism as emerging in an environment that encouraged translocal analogies and comparisons to emerge.

Doing so I wish to bring the history of interwar Jewish fascism in dialogue with the histories of Jewish Left radicalism – histories that have their own stories of creative plagiarisms – and at the same time to remove from it a strong Palestino-centric bias, which treats it in isolation rather than within a larger twentieth century ideological context. In fact, I suggest that chronicling these


comparisons and borrowing, together with the widening gap distancing Jabotinsky from his ideological children, can provide us with a fairly accurate index of processes of political radicalization. Shifting our periodization backwards, identifying clear signs of political radicalization already in the early 1920s, constitutes a second critical intervention. Radicalization of the Revisionist movement, I argue, is not a development one could recognize only after 1929, in light of the increasing violent frictions between Jews and Arabs in Palestine, or appearing against the backdrop of the rise of Hitler to power. Instead, it was a subterranean feature of Revisionist Zionism from its inception, that came to surface quicker than previously assumed. Third is my proposal to read the maximalists as radical modernists, who grew at the intersection of European anti-liberal thought and radical Zionism. To use contemporary academic parlance, I propose that these thinkers should be read as agents of intercultural transfer, who imported into pre-statehood Palestine illiberal and anti-liberal radical ideas, transforming and modifying them along the way. At the very same time, I reject the notion that we should to read them as the Palestinian couriers of a conservative or reactionary revolution, nor as cultural-ideological nostalgists. The borrowed fragments, categories of thought, modes of argumentation from the Jewish sources and European authoritarian movements, but they were modernists who were acutely aware of the very rupture consisted by modernity. They injected terms like “malchut Israel” (the Kingdom of Israel) into the bloodstream of pre- and post-independence Palestine/Israel, but they did not believe in the possibility of returning to days of ancient glory but had a modernist vision of the polity-to-come.

Additionally, I hope this effort will help us move the discussion beyond the epic narratives produced by members of the so-called “fighting family” (“ha’mishpacha ha’lochemet”) – veterans or direct descendants of the members of the paramilitary groups Etzel and Lehi⁶ – who still fight to secure a place for

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⁶ Etzel, acronym for Irgun Zva’i Le’umi (National Military Organization), was founded 1931 by Haganah commander who rejected the Jewish Agency’s “restraint” and no reprisal policy. It led the hawkish and anti-British line, especially after the execution of one of its members, Shlomo Ben Yosef (1938) and the publication of the May 1939 White Paper. However, at the outbreak of World War II the Etzel declared truce and many of its members joined the British Army’s
the anonymous soldiers of the paramilitary Right-wing undergrounds in the Israeli pantheon, and end up offering, contra-Mapai and the Labor Zionist hegemonic memory, martyr hagiographies depicting heroic struggles and uncompromising anti-colonial revolt. These effective melodramas, stewed watchfully for domestic consumption, tell us more contemporary Israel, combining rigid neoliberalism with a nostalgia to an age of blood and fire, than they tell us much about the chronicles of the past. Against these, I would like to recover the voices of the self-described pre-1948 and pre-Altalena affair maximalists, without dismissing the broader, quintessentially European, ideological and intellectual contexts from which radical Revisionism borrowed its ideas.

We shall proceed in three steps, corresponding the three types of borrowings. Section I focuses on the self-described radical avant-garde group known as “Brit Habiryonim” (“The Zealots' Alliance”) – a trio that was composed by the essayist and activist Abba Ahimeir (born Abba Shaul ben Isaac Gaissinovitch; 1897-1962), the modernist poet Uri Zvi Greenberg (1896–1981), and the journalist and translator Yehoshua (Joshua) Heschel Yevin (1891–1970), and the way in which their admiration of Leninist revolutionary methods led them to admire Italian fascism. Moving from spiritual to actual contacts, section II looks at the Italian members of Betar such as Isacco (Yitzhak) Sciaky (1896-1979) and Leone Carpi (1887-1964), as well as the colorful Yirmiyahu (“Imra”)

Palestinian units (and later the Jewish brigade). Lehi, short of Lohamei Herut Yisrael (Israel's freedom fighters), was established in August 1940 by members who rejected the truce and continued fighting the British. It was often referred to as the Stern gang, after its leader-founder, Avraham ("Yair") Stern (killed by the British, 1942). Both groups integrated into the IDF in September 1948.

Halpern (1901-1962), who worked in Italy and provided crucial personal and ideological bridges connecting Palestine’s radicals with the Italian fascists. Section III shows how, alongside Bolshevik revolutionary zeal and Italian fascism, radical Revisionist began seeing themselves in comparison to the Irish republicans and sought to develop a local version of the Sinn Féin language, emphasizing self-standing and an uncompromisingly anti-British language.

Part I: The beginnings of “Revolutionary Zionism,” or: Lenin on my mind.

It was in November 1923 that Vladimir Jabotinsky published in Rassuyet (Рассвет), the Berlin-based Revisionist periodical in Russian, the essay that is often regarded as the epitome and summary of Revisionist Zionism – “On the Iron Wall” (“О Зеleeznoi Stene”). The essay stated boldly:

Zionist colonization, even the most restricted, must either be terminated or carried out in defiance of the will of the native population. This colonization can, therefore, continue and develop only under the protection of a force independent of the local population - an iron wall which the native population cannot break through. This is, in toto, our policy towards the Arabs. To formulate it any other way would only be hypocrisy.8

Not many essays in the history of Zionism were discussed so widely and at the same time interpreted so incorrectly. Jabotinsky’s “Iron Wall” was read prophetically, as a term signifying the yet-to-come Israeli defense forces, and the essay was interpreted a clear break from the official policies of the Zionist executive which rested on collaboration with the British Mandatory forces. Jabotinsky’s militaristic call for arms, however, had little to do with statist visions nor on dreams of full divorce from Britain’s Empire. On the contrary, the essay in fact demonstrates exceptionally well Jabotinsky’s “minoritarian” political perspective that pushed him to envision a vertical alliance with the British

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Mandatory forces which, he hoped, would provide the umbrella for Zionist colonization efforts as well as the military protection for the Yishuv (Jewish population in pre-statehood Palestine). The only question as far as Jabotinsky was concerned was what would the iron wall would be made of: Jewish or British bayonets? That is, would the Zionist colonization efforts be secured with the aid of a Jewish militia under the auspices of the British, or British colonial police and army forces who would do the dirty job on the Jews behalf and for their sake. The memories of WWI loomed large. After all, it was Jabotinsky who played a central role, alongside Joseph Trumpeldor, in creating the Jewish Legion in August 1917, proving to himself and the world the proof that when needed, Jews could pick up the sword and fight. That sense of pride and splendor, the Betarist code of “hadar” (glory, impeccability) was very close to the always associated with the iconic images of Lieutenant Jabotinsky dressed in British army uniforms, an Odessa Jew performing the English stiff upper lip. Not coincidentally, Jabotinsky’s essay was published almost precisely on the day marking the sixth anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, on November 4th, 1923.

It was during that same year, 1923, that Jabotinsky also penned an article criticizing those who began using the expression “Perfidious Albion” to criticize British policies. Such critical voices were not abundant, but could be clearly heard in Betarist circles after the British issued the 1922 White Paper, which established River Jordan as Palestine’s eastern border, separated from Transjordan. Jabotinsky had little patience to such babble: Like the myth of the benevolent, philosemitic Bible-reading Englishman, he explained, the image of the British as untrustworthy, Machiavellian politicians, was also an empty trope that did not help as guidance in Zionist politics. Yes, indeed, Jabotinsky admitted, relationships with the British were often rocky (after all, Jabotinsky was condemned by the Mandatory Government to 15 years’ hard labor due to his role in using arms in fending off attackers in Jerusalem in Passover 1920, and he also considered the cutting off of Transjordan from the “Jewish National Home” as a slap in the face) but one always hopes that the winds of change will bring others
to power in London. These were not entirely vain hopes: as I showed elsewhere, less than four years later, in 1928, Jabotinsky resumed his contacts with the eccentric Josiah C. Wedgwood (1872-1943), whom he knew from the battlefields of Gallipoli, who proposed canceling the Mandate and turning Palestine into a Dominion of the British Commonwealth of Nations, just like Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. Jabotinsky was quick to endorse the plan and make it part of the official Revisionist platform, creating the Palestine-based “Seventh Dominion League”. The reasons for Jabotinsky enthusiasm were clear: the scheme not only offered an almost-state, enjoying self-government in return of pledge of allegiance to the British monarch, but also provided the imperial auspices and protection so desperately needed. The fact the Dominion scheme was not based on abstract political theory but on concrete precedents and living examples is also important to bear in mind. It allowed Jabotinsky imagine nationalism under the aegis of empire, not in opposition to it, and to base his claim-making on intra-imperial comparisons with other groups demanding greater self-government, imagining that the future would be marked by increasing “dominionization.” In that sense, endorsing Wedgwood’s plan was a renewal of a beautiful friendship: in Jabotinsky as well as Wedgwood’s mind, the future promised a deeper bond between Britain and the new-old nations, modeled on this camaraderie-in-arms.

Wartime memories were also crucial in the case of Abba Ahimeir, but they quite resonated differently. 1917 signified for him the year of the October Revolution, not only the establishment of the Jewish Legion, and the unfolding of events which followed it brought up traumatic memories that shaped Ahimeir’s adult identity: In April 1919, his younger brother Meir – an officer in the Red Army and a committed Bolshevik – was killed in a battle against Polish forces. Shortly thereafter he began signing his essays with a new Hebrew nom de plume – Achi-Meir (literally: my brother, Meir) – thus carrying the traumatic memories of revolution and civil war with him wherever he went. By the time he immigrated to Palestine, in 1924, he abandoned his original Russian last name

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9 [add reference to my 2017 T&C article]
Gaissinovitch completely, embracing a new persona. Still a socialist, Ahimeir’s first steps in the new land made him an active member of the socialist Ahдут Ha’avoda (Labor Unity) party. He was skeptical of Weizmann as well as Jabotinsky’s reliance on British protection: Are we as naïve as to think that Britain would be willing to spill the blood of its sons to establish a Jewish state for us? He asked his Berl Katzenelson, his former mentor, in a letter in 1925; More than a hero Jabotinsky was a Don-Quixote, he argued, prisoner of his own hallucinations.\textsuperscript{11} Within a few years the subtle irony turned into outspoken criticism, dismissing Labor Zionism, challenging Jabotinsky’s cautious diplomacy, calling for an open revolt against the British, and describing himself a Hebrew fascist.

A bold statement that provided an indication of Ahimeir’s ideological conversion can be found in an article he published in \textit{Ha’toren} (lit. The Mast), an American Hebrew periodical, in August 1923, a few months before immigrating to Palestine and 3 months before Jabotinsky’s “Iron Wall” was published. It was entitled “Few Ideas About Fascism”:

From the psychological point of view, there is no difference between fascism and Bolshevism. There is a great distance between these two movements when it comes to their aspirations, but their living spirit is basically the same. There is an ideological distance, but not a psychological one. Both movements try to install their opinions in society, and both stand out in their impatience towards other opinions; both hinder the mutual understanding within their societies. These are the slaves of Losung [slogans] of our times. Results do not interest them: the man of action thinks only of the day; the man of thought is preoccupied with the future and the past. For the psychologists, the carriers of fascism and Bolshevism, as well as the masses supporting these two movements, belong to the same psychological type. And in the eyes of the historians of the future to come as well, there will be no big gap separating these two movements.\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{11} Abba Ahimeir, letter to Berl Katznelson, June 30, 1925, as quoted in Anita Shapira, \textit{Berl} [Hebrew version.], pp. 389-390.
\textsuperscript{12} Abba Ahimeir, "Ra’ayonot Bodedim al Ha’fashism [Hebrew: Few Ideas About Fascism]." \textit{HaToren} 4-5 (1923): 150-55 on 154. (my translation, AD)
The essay offers a clear demonstration of Ze’ev Sternhell’s famous thesis: fascism was first and foremost a form of a radical cultural revolt; it stemmed from the ideological Left, originating in attempts to offer non-materialist revisions of Marxism while sharing the Marxist vehement rejection of bourgeois, rationalistic and procedural forms of politics; soon enough, fascists embraced a myth of violence, thereby transcending traditional ideological divisions and ending up in that liminal space of “ni droite, ni gauche” (neither “Left” nor “Right”), which could be maintained only by visions of permanent struggle, myth of violence and constant revolution. Fascism, understood by Ahimeir, fits this theoretical model exceptionally well. It was seen by him not as a reactionary, backward-looking but as a revolutionary, utopian movement, striving forward, breaking old conventions and stagnation, celebrating youth and rejuvenation. He came to fascism via Bolshevik Communnism and an unyielding contempt of “moderate” socialism that failed to deliver on its utopian promise. The revolutionary zeal was present in his writings as early as 1919, when he served as a foreign affairs correspondent for Izvestia, Bobruisk Soviet’s journal, signing his articles with the penname "Johan Geschalski" (John of Giscala or Yohanan Ish-Halav in Hebrew), after one of the leaders of the Jewish revolt against Rome in 70 CE. Even when turning Zionist he still admired Lenin, as Colin Shindler showed, not because he was a carrier of a Communist message of equality and social justice but “as an example of what single-mindedness, ruthless expediency and revolutionary determinism could achieve.” Ahimeir made his admiration of Lenin explicit when declaring “Our teacher is not Herzl or Jabotinsky, but Lenin. We reject the doctrines and philosophies of Lenin and his followers, but they were correct in their practical path. This is the path of violence, blood and personal sacrifice.”

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15 Shindler, The Triumph of Military Zionism, 156.
Ahimeir, in other words, thought of Italian fascism as a revolutionary movement that took the élan and intrepid energy of the Bolsheviks, yet without the Communist false believe in internationalism. Both fascists and Bolshevik revolutionaries, he asserted, were to be admired for their heroism, their readiness for self-sacrifice, their embrace of violence. He was particularly taken by the way both were privileging action over contemplation or what he called *Losung* – the word, the sophisticated theory, the mobilizing slogan. It was not a revolution derived from philosophical principles as a revolt of a spirit unbound. (Likewise, in the same essay Ahimeir began drawing explicit parallels between Fascist Italy and Sinn Fein in Ireland and Ataturk’s Turkey. Youth, militarism, and aesthetic of revival united them all.)

Ahimeir’s soon-to-become partners, Uri Zvi Greenberg and Joshua Yevin, followed a similar trajectory. Born in Eastern Galicia and Ukraine respectively, both immigrated to Palestine the same time as Ahimeir (1923-4), and like him, both were initially affiliated with the two Labor parties, Hapoel Hatzair and Ahдут Ha’avoda-Poale Zion, with Greenberg publishing his first poems in *Davar*, the Labor Party daily newspaper, and Yevin, earning his living as translator and teacher, working for the cultural committee of the Histadrut. Verbose virtuoso, Greenberg played the more significant role in shaping the political language and imagination of the Right. Like Ahimeir he also admired Lenin, whom he eulogized in 1924 in *Kuntras*, the party’s journal (prior to *Davar*), as the benefactor of “a bleeding Torah” (*torah medamemet*), a creator of “a dictatorship that a miracle accompanies, as well as glory.”

It did not take long for him to lose hope that Berl and Ben-Gurion’s socialist movement would become the local revolutionary avant-garde and searched for a way out. His Hebrew poetry from those years – lush, excessive, expressionist – was already infused with messianic and irredentist language. In “Yerushalayim shel Matah” (Earthly Jerusalem; 1924), written with what became his trademark prophetic tone, he envisioned a

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17 Uri Zvi [Greenberg], “el ever Moskva [Hebrew: towards Moscow], *Kuntras* 8, 15 (January 25, 1924), 3.
pregnant Jerusalem, carrying in its womb a future kingdom (malchut) that would stretch from El-Arish to Damascus.\textsuperscript{18}

Although Greenberg had his moment of political conversion around the same time as Ahimeir and Yevin and despite the fact the three shared a similar temperament, there were significant differences between them. Unlike the Russian-Jews Yevin and Ahimeir, Greenberg was a Galicianer with a strong Hassidic pedigree, who had a more ambivalent attitude towards the Russian-speaking, Tolstoyian Halutzim (pioneers). Unlike Ahimeir, who befriended Kaznnelson, the main pundit of the Labor in their hometown in Bobrinsk, Belorussia, prior to their immigration to Palestine, Greenberg was never an “insider.” Greenberg also had a far more fraught relationship with Europe and European culture. He referred to Europe not by name but as “malkhes fun tseylem” (“the Kingdom of the Cross”) in his early Yiddish poems, and as a place of great terror, as title of his first Hebrew book – Eima Gdola Ve-Yare’ach (Great Terror and Moon; 1925) – demonstrates. His attitudes were shaped by two pre-immigration horrendous near-death experiences which scarred him deeply, first in the battlefields of WWI, and soon afterwards in November 1918, at the armistice day pogrom in Lwów, where Polish soldiers who celebrated their victory were close to slaughter him and his family. (Yevin also put his traumatic experiences from WWI – during which he served at the Russian army as a military surgeon – in writing.\textsuperscript{19}) Violence was not abstract or remote for him, and it colored his expressionist poetry, depicting a godless world, battlefields from which civilization had disappeared, and the horrors of the tormenting, tortured human flesh.

Greenberg’s growing alienation from Labor Zionist petty politics and his shift towards political Messianism, I would suggest, was in fact surprisingly similar to the one experienced at the very same time by Gershom Scholem. Both immigrated to Palestine the same year, both were Zionists prior to their immigration and despised middle class respectable morality, and both found the

\textsuperscript{18} Uri Zvi Greenberg, "Y'erushalayim shel matah," in Eimah gedolah veyareah, 57. Orig. pub Hapoel Hatzair, 18 April 1924.
\textsuperscript{19} Y. H. (Yehoshua Heschel) Yevin. Be’mazal Ma’adim [Hebrew: Mars Zodiac]. Tel Aviv: Ahdut, 1928.
wide gap separating the Zionism they envisaged from the realities on the ground intolerable. Their central-European background played a big role in shaping their reaction to Palestine’s political landscape, as well as the specific moment in which they arrived at the Promised Land: a period of great optimism — shortly after it was declared a British Mandate, and at a time of rapid urban development in Tel Aviv — that was quickly replaced, especially during the years 1926—1927, with an acute economic crisis and general demoralized atmosphere in the Yishuv, leading a considerable number of the immigrants who composed the so-called “Fourth Aliya” to leave the country shortly after their arrival. The haughty talk of halutziyut (pioneer ethos) did not charm either of them but was seen as suspiciously similar to the European petite bourgeoisie they despised heartedly, the Labor Zionist institutions – the Histadrut (Labor Federation), the organs of the Jewish Agency, and the astonishingly low prospects of employment for any Jew in Palestine no affiliated with them – were not different in their view from any other type of oppressive, rabbinical authority. But far more crucial: both felt that the Jewish society in Palestine was hallucinating about “return” but in fact was unable to comprehend the metaphysical depths of messianic Judaism. Each in his own way recognized the intimate link between the “actualization” [Aktualisierung] of Hebrew, the spoken, lay language, and actualization of the nationalist project in mundane Jerusalem. With actual Zion failing to offer them the home that they imagined, they became fascinated by metaphysical language and unattainable homes, and assigned themselves the role of rediscoverers of

ancient mystical myths. \textsuperscript{21} Scholem became the antiseptic, academic analyst and recorder of this forgotten mystical tradition, and arrived at the conclusion that the crisis of Zionism lays in the fact it chose to construe itself in messianic terms. Greenberg, on the other hand, was hypnotized by that language, and made himself a prophet of wrath, reminding Palestine’s Jews how immense is the distance between their piecemeal, childish political schemes and the inner nature of political Messianism.

The fact that Ahimeir’s radicalism, unlike Greenberg’s, had a far thicker Russian accent, shaped the way he approached Jewish nationalism. As suggested recently by Peter Bergamin, Ahimeir’s PhD thesis, submitted to the Vienna University in 1924 under the title \textit{Bemerkungen zu Spenglers Auffassung Russlands} [German: “Remarks on Spengler’s view of Russia”], defending Russia against Spengler can explain much of his radical Zionism: \textsuperscript{22} Endorsing many of Spengler’s tools of analysis, Ahimeir was nevertheless unwilling to accept Spengler’s derogatory view of Russia, and came to develop an interesting distinction between “civilizations” and “small peoples.” Civilizations were always big in scale, yet prone to decline and degenerate; “small peoples,” on the other hand, were always fighting to preserve and revive their cultural uniqueness, always in competition with the universalizing, ultimately coercive influence of the dominant, bigger civilizations surrounding them. While civilizations, in other words, were fighting cultural decline, small peoples, by contrast, were fighting for cultural rebirth. This meta-historical imagination quickly informed Ahimeir’s ideas regarding “revolutionary Zionism”: Italians were “small people,” and so were the Jews. The gap from the founding father was clear already at this founding moment: for Jabotinsky, a good disciple of Bauer, Renner and the


\textsuperscript{22} Aba Gaissinowitsch [Abba Ahimeir]. "Bemerkungen Zu Spenglers Auffassung Russlands [German: Remarks on Spengler’s View of Russia]." Unpublished PhD dissertation, Wiener Universität, 1924 [?]. I would like to thank Peter Bergamin for providing me a copy of the dissertation.
Austro-Marxists, and a supporter of the post-Versailles minorities treatises, small communities sought to find autonomy and relied on protection from Empires, larger states, or the newly founded League of Nations; For Ahimeir small nations were all about shaking off foreign influences, restoring their authenticity and youth. Shaking off the yoke of parliamentarism, Ahimeir read the Italians through these Spenglerian spectacles as a nation fighting to remove alien elements that were imposed on it by foreign powers.

All three men started drifting away from Labor Zionist circles after spring 1926, and officially joined Jabotinsky’s movement in February 1928. After the wave of violence that swept through the country in summer 1929 (*meora’ot tarpat* in Hebrew, *thawrat al-buraq* in Arabic) it was easier for them to capture the center stage with their message of unyielding confrontation and revolutionary violence. Having no access to concealed weapons, they remained preachers of the clenched fist, but were manifested shrewdness and remarkable sophistication in using of new media channels that were not associated with the Labor Zionists such as *Sadan* (a short-lived literary journal founded, edited and to a large extent also written by Greenberg, 1924-7), *Doar Hayom* (a daily founded by Itamar Ben-Avi and edited for a brief but a significant period, 1928-1931, by Jabotinsky) and *Hazit Ha’am* (lit. The Nation’s Frontier, 1931-34), to spread and amplify their message. By 1933-4 they were already notoriously known, but dwindled in influence after the Arlosoroff assassination and its ensuing trial, that exposed a deep schism in the Yishuv, after which they were marginalized again, seen as preachers of a questionable, precarious political agenda. In between, as Dan Heller convincingly showed, they played a significant extra-Palestinian role in radicalizing Polish and Baltic members of the Betar youth movement, who were intoxicated by the fiery self-described maximalists from Palestine who distinguished themselves from the all too obedient and impotent “Salon Revisionists.”\(^{(23)}\)

In making themselves a political fraction within the Revisionist camp, Yevin, Ahimeir and Greenberg were forced to forge a new idiom that would

\(^{(23)}\) Heller, *Jabotinsky’s Children*, chap. 3.
provide the ideological cement for the early radical Right, the same way it glued them, despite the fact they came to fascism from different trajectories and were radicalized for dissimilar reasons. Choosing to call themselves “Brit Habiryonim”—a name chosen by Greenberg in October 1931, borrowed from a 1903 popular poem by Yaakov Cohen, who was probably the first to make an explicit reference to the Second Temple’s zealots – was a savvy move, indicative of their self-fashioning and self-understanding: a small group of determined professional revolutionaries who were willing not only to fight a far stronger foreign Empire but also to dismiss with scorn the authority of the rabbis. Relying on Second Temple imagery was a savvy move: it provided a Jewish cover to what was to a large extent a Leninist conception of a revolution carried out by a small, committed group of professionals, insinuating a historical glossary that was founded on a trans-temporal analogy, with Rome becoming codename for Britain, the conciliatory feeble rabbis as stand-in for the leadership of the Yishuv, and the ancient Sicarii (zealots known for the small daggers they were carrying) presented as the Briyonim’s ancient forerunners. Additionally, it allowed them to fashion themselves as scions-followers of Jabotinsky, whose blazing rhetoric of “In blood and fire Judah fell, in blood and fire Judah will rise!” was constantly quoted by them.

The trio’s demand that a separate Histadrut for the non-socialist workers would be established was consistent with their Leninist ideas, hoping to create the local version of the Soviets, harbors of a committed Jewish proletariat free from the strong grip of the Labor Zionist institutions, that will provide them with political capital their clearly lacked. Utterly unsuccessful in achieving this initial goal, their hatred of the Labor Zionist Histadrut deepened as years passed. But far more radical was their reexamination of the basic premises of Herzlian political Zionism, that rested much too heavily on the idea of a Charter, a legal authorization for Jewish colonial activity in Palestine signed and sealed by European powers. Greenberg’s 1937 poem, “Emet Ahat ve-Lo Shtayim” (“One Truth and Not Two), provided the memorable, fierce poetic expression to this dismissal of Herzlian-inspired “Charterism” by contrasting the teaching of “the Rabbis,” the Zionist hegemony, who spoke of land as something that is bought
with money, and the poet who says in contempt that “land is not bought with money” but is that which “is conquered with blood,” for “only one who follows the cannon in the field, shall merit to follow his good plow on this conquered field.”. But the origins of this contempt of “the rabbis” can be found even before the 1936 Arab Revolt, and stem from the basic rejection of the very modes of operation of the Zionist organizations. For what is needed, Ahimeir argued in a famous 1932 article contrasting the first Zionist congress in Basle (1897) with the Communist conference in Zimmerwald (1915), was to follow the example of the latter – a conference in which Lenin distanced his fraction from the reformist socialists and began building a committed, revolutionary party instead. The message behind this historical analogy was clear: to succeed, Zionism had to discard the outdated Herzlian doctrines and build its own professional revolutionary group, composed of brave young man willing to use violence to promote their cause.

These ideas were much too radical in Jabotinsky’s view, who was quick to author the article "On Adventurism" (February 1932), warning against the excessive ideas of the new Revisionist phalanx. His failure in restraining his rebel children had much to do with the image of intra-Revisionist continuity they fabricated. Sugarcoating what was in fact a disruptive, disobedient attempt to challenge Jabotinsky, they explicitly called him to declare himself a dictator or simply Il Duce in 1932, thereby abandoning his outdated law-abiding beliefs in parliamentary politics and considerable Anglophile biases. References to Italy were especially effective: Choosing the penname “Altaiena,” Jabotinsky’s never hid the fact he admired the Italy of Mazzini and Garibaldi, and regarded it his spiritual homeland. Relying on this Italophilia, the maximalist linked their


25 Jabotinsky started using the name shortly after he joined the Faculty of Law at the Sapienza University in Rome. Though he never obtained the degree, he took courses in Roman law, criminal procedure, political economy and statistics. During the Italian sojourn Jabotinsky remained fascinated by the beauty of Marinetti’s futurism, the works of Mazzini, the poetry of Leopardi and Giusti, and by the figure of Garibaldi, one of the heroes of the Italian Risorgimento to whom he later dedicated a feuilleton. See Vladimir Ze’ev Jabotinsky, “Garibaldi” in Feuilltions, Jabotinsky Institute Archive, F1912/501/FR. For discussion see Svetlana Natkovich, Ben ‘Anene Zohar: Yetsirato Shel Vladimir (Zeev) Z’abotinski Ba-Heksher Ha-Hevrati [Hebrew: Among
message with Jabotinsky’s writings, which were rich in positive references to the Italian Risorgimento and to the nineteenth-century romantic nationalism, and to draw a straight line connecting them to Mussolini and Giovanni Gentile, Mussolini’s court philosopher and the person to coin the term “totalitarianism.”

Though the Russian revolutionary temper ran high, after from that stage on.

Part II: Jewish Risorgimento? Malchut Yisrael and the dream of a Hebraic mare nostrum

Distinction between German and Italian fascisms were somewhat blurred until the rise of Hitler to power and the passing of the Nuremberg Laws. Yehoshua Heschel Yevin had no problem offering an apologia for Hitlerism, describing the Nazi party as “a vehicle for national liberation-in the same category as the revolutionary organizations of the Italians, Poles and Czechs.”

In July 1933, after the rise of Hitler to power and during the stormy debates surrounding the Arlosoroff murder, Uri Zvi Greenberg complained of an anti-Maximalist witch-hunt, describing life in the Yishuv, in “an atmosphere intoxicated by hostility, infused by socialists and gviraurcrats” – a Greenberg coinage, composed of “gvir” (man of considerable wealth) and “bureaucrat” – became unbearable, “worse than life under the Hitler regime.”

Such explicit reference became rare, however, when the anti-Semitic character of the Nazi regime could no longer put in brackets. With the German Führer no longer available as an appropriate model, the attractiveness Il Duce increased.

It was in this context that Tzvi Kolitz (1912-2002) published the first Hebrew biography of Mussolini. Born to an Orthodox Lithuanian family, and moved to Italy in the 1930s to study political science at the University of Florence

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27 Shindler, The Triumph of Military Zionism, p. 172

28 Greenberg, Uri Zvi. “mi’shavua le’shavua” Hazit Ha’am, July 7, 1933, p. 2
and to attend the Beitarist Naval Academy in Civitavecchia. During these formative Italian years, he realized the importance of a strong political leadership arguing that Fascism was the most significant ideology in Europe and the Italian State was his concrete realization. Published in Tel Aviv in 1936, the biography dissociated fascism from nationalism, presenting the former as free of any Jew hatred. Similar to Ahimeir, Kolitz’s depiction of Mussolini emphasized the “exceptional will-power [of] a man who knows what he wants, and wants the favor and the future of Italy to the best of his belief. [...] An idea without a leader is like a corpse without a soul. [...] [Subsequently] strong ideas depend on strong personalities.”

As appendix, the book provided translated excerpts of some of Mussolini’s speeches and essays, including his famous Doctrine of Fascism ("La dottrina del fascismo"; co-written by Gentile) of 1932, appearing in Hebrew for the first time.

Unlike the Birinyinim trio, that operated in Palestine and rarely left it, Kolitz was already part of a vibrant Italo-Palestinian network. He lived in Italy for several years and attended the Betar Naval Academy in Civitavecchia, a Revisionist naval training school established by the Revisionist with the agreement of Benito Mussolini. It was Kolitz who used his contacts to reach out to Quinto Mazzoleni, the Italian Consul in Palestine and Transjordan, providing Jabotinsky a secret channel in the attempt to organize a meeting with Mussolini. He later immigrated to Mandatory Palestine and joined the Etzel and was arrested for a certain period by the British. After 1948 he became a film producer, involved in the production of Israel’s first-full motion picture, "Hill 24 Doesn’t Answer" (1954). He later moved to the US, where he produced a number of Broadway plays – including Rolf Hochhuth’s "Deputy," a controversial play

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29 Zvi Kolitz, Mussolini: His Personality and Doctrine (Tel Aviv: Tabel, 1936), 5-82.
which criticized the Vatican during the Holocaust (1964) – wrote fiction and taught Jewish philosophy at Yeshiva University.

The main theoretician and ideologue of Revisionism in Italy was, however, Isaaco Sciaky. A Sepharadi Jew born in Salonica, but Italian by adoption, he was the one who followed more closely than any other Revisionist the neo-Hegelian philosophical trends in general, and the teachings of Giovanni Gentile in particular. Revolting against Bendetto Croce, Gentile adopted a more radical and subjectivist view of Idealism, reforming the Hegelian dialectic, and stressing the importance of the “pure act of thinking,” the creative principle of all the reality, also known as Actual Idealism.\(^{31}\) He quickly became the regime’s philosopher, serving in Mussolini’s Ministry of the Education (1922 to 1924), involved in the 1925 “Manifesto of the Fascist Intellectuals,” ghostwriting Mussolini’s infamous 1932 *Doctrine of Fascism*.\(^{32}\) The first epistolary contact between Sciaky and Gentile is dated November 1922, soon after the March on Rome.\(^{33}\)

Writing to Gentile, Sciaky expressed his hope that the fascist cultural regeneration would inspire the awakening of the Jewish “Oriental people”:

> *La cultura Italiana così meglio potrà venire incontro alle nostre popolazioni orientali nell’ora del risveglio di quei paesi, venendosi a determinare quei profonti contatti specialmente tra gli Italiani e gli ebrei dai quali io spero stia per scaturire nella comune opera di civiltà in Oriente, luce e vanto di due popoli immortali.*\(^{34}\)

[crude translation:] Italian culture will be better able to meet our eastern populations at the time of the awakening of those countries, coming to determine those profound contacts especially among the Italians and Jews from whom I hope it is to emerge in the common work of civilization in the East, light and boasting of two immortal peoples.

Unlike the Palestine Maximalists, Sciaky’s perception of the State was taken directly from the Italian neo-Idealist lexicon. In accordance with Gentile, he

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\(^{32}\) Conversely, in 1925, Gentile’s old friend and colleague Benedetto Croce promoted the so-called “Manifesto of the Anti-Fascist Intellectuals.”
\(^{33}\) The entire correspondence is available at the archive of the Foundation Giovanni Gentile (AFGG), fascicule “Sciaky.” The last letter is dated May 1940, soon after Sciaky arrival in Palestine.
\(^{34}\) Sciaky to Gentile, November 8, 1922, in AFGG, fascicule “Sciaky.”
perceived the State as an Ethical State, which had to be internalized by the individuals.\textsuperscript{35} As he wrote in 1932, the State:

\begin{quote}
\textit{is the supreme historical realization of the human activity, as concreteness of morality, […] which has in itself the ethical nature, […] an ideal, in the light of which the real state is always inadequate – on the other hand, the true state lives within the consciousness, or better the true state is the consciousness of citizens.}\textsuperscript{36}
\end{quote}

According to Sciaky, the ethical nature of the State found one practical application in the economic sphere. On January 1935, soon before he left Alexandria to return in Italy, Sciaky organized a series of conferences in Tel Aviv, the topic of which was the Corporative State.\textsuperscript{37} According to Sciaky, the corporative State represented the modernity because it was the essence of the Ethical State, an “ideal that incessantly fulfills itself.”\textsuperscript{38} Only due to this constant act of realization, the State was harmonizes the individualistic interests with those of the nation. Sciaky underlined also that the “State of law,” ignoring the economic activities, tolerates the antisocial and Hobbesian “war of all against all.” On the other hand, while resuming from Rousseau the legitimacy of the individual economic activities and recognizing the private properties, the Corporative State harmonizes them considering a third essential element: the collective and unitary interest of the State itself as the synthesis of the productive activities of the nation.\textsuperscript{39} Therefore, concluded Sciaky, the Corporate State removes the egoistic interests of the individuals, the trade unions, and the classes: only through a corporative system the social justice within the State could be ensured. The individual is no more in opposition with the State and vice versa. The State, is eventually perceived as \textit{interiore homines} and no more as \textit{inter homines}.\textsuperscript{40}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{35} See James Gregor, \textit{Giovanni Gentile: Philosopher of Fascism…}, cit., 29-34.
\textsuperscript{37} See Vincenzo Pinto (edited by), \textit{Il Salonicchiotto…}, cit., 17-8.
\end{flushright}
[missing: add more quotes from Sciaky’s writing on political philosophy in
Hebrew, written post immigration]

Sciaky also established close contacts with Leone Carpi, the Naziv
(commander) of Civitavecchia’s Naval Academy (1934-1936), and the founding
editor of the Revisionist newspaper L’Idea Sionistica (“The Zionist Idea,” 1930-
1938). L’Idea Sionistica took a philo-fascist line from an early stage. It argued
that there was a fundamental identity of interests bringing the fascist state and
the Revisionist-Zionist movement into the same fold. In 1935 Carpi and Sciaky
represented the Italian Zionist-Revisionist section at the founding congress of the
(Revisionist) New Zionist Organization in Vienna.

Little attentions had been given to this Italian network and its connection to
parallel radicalization processes in Palestine. This was a unique dynamic and an
interesting moment in the history of modern Jewish political vocabulary: At the
very same time Sciaky and his peers in Italy was thinking of a corporatist state
model, the term “Malchut Yisrael,” literally “The Kingdom of Israel,” was inserted
into the political lexicon by the Maximalists in Palestine. The first appearances
of the term, as we have seen, date back to the mid-1920s, predominantly in
Greenberg’s poetry. It became more popular during the 1930s, especially thanks
to poems such as “In a Child’s Ear,” written by Greenberg in response to the 1929
massacres, and in light of the increasing clashes between Jews and Palestinian-
Arabs and the growing dissatisfaction from the Yishuv’s havlaga (restraint)
policy.41 It was further popularized later by Avraham Stern and Yisrael Schieb
Eldad, who associated the term with the ideology of the Lehi.42 But these later
iterations of the term added to new meanings to it, meanings that were not

41 Uri Tzvi Greenberg, "Be’oznei Yeled Asaper [Hebrew: In a Child’s Ear]." Moznaim 2
20-21 (1930): 1-2. For discussion and analysis see
42 Eldad, for one, mentioned the enormous impact Greenberg’s poem “In a Child’s Ear,” had upon
him.
necessarily in it before that. In fact, up to 1940, the question whether Malchut (kingdom) stands for Medinah (state) was never fully discussed. All too often, the terms were used metaphorically, or interchangeably and mostly inconsistently: Malchut Yisrael was sometimes understood allegorically, not as a direct reference as much as an echo of past glories and the ancient Israelites’ monarchies; at other times, it was understood as a term referring to a modern state apparatus, stand-in for Jabotinsky’s term “Medina Ivrit” (Hebrew state).

This conceptual puzzle, that would be solved only during World War II, when Stern, the Lehi’s charismatic leader, replaced Medinah (state) with Malchut (kingdom), was still open and unsolved during the 1930s. In that respect, at least, the Revisionist radicals were lost in translation: Italian Revisionists stirred away from any term echoing monarchy for obvious reasons, and focused their attention instead on the concept “lo stato”. For them, fascism was on the one hand a product of modern Hegelian philosophy applied to politics, and on the other hand and at the same time, an old Italian tradition, beginning as early as the first Renaissance manuals on politics, governance and the reason of “the state” began to appear. Palestine’s maximalists, taking their cue from Greenberg’s expressionist messianic poetry, were free from such conceptual restrictions.

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43 In June 1940, shortly before he split from the Irgun, Stern stated that the underground’s mission is to "establish the kingdom of Israel within its historical boundaries." In November 1940, about five months after his split from the Irgun, Stern authored a famous manifest listing 18 “principles of the [Jewish] revival” (‘ikarei ha-tehiya). The fourth principle described the foundations on which the "Kingdom of Israel" will be established, speaking explicitly of a “Resurrection of the Kingdom”, while the tenth and eleventh points defined the meaning of Malchut as "conquest by force" of "Hebrew mastery over the redeemed land." Replying to some Lehi members who criticized him for using such mystical and religious terms, Stern claimed that these expressions do not carry religious connotations, but are "a living symbols of the spirit of the nation.” Though he toned down some of the religious language in the final version of his manifesto, he did not abandon the term Malchut Yisrael and stressed that "our hope is that when the kingdom of Israel is established on a wall, the Hebrew people will reign in its land as king reigns.” See

If Italian and Palestinian Revisionists were speaking different political languages, what united them, as Eran Kaplan and others showed, was geography. Not physical geography so much as the culturally constructed visions of the Mediterranean, the mare. [paragraph to be completed]

In a book he published in later years, Yirmiyahu ("Irma") Halpern flashed out the connection between Revisionist politics and the turn-to-the-sea:

There were three approaches to Zionism: the first was the "synthetic-practical" approach, which was embodied in Dr. Chaim Weizmann’s mode of conduct, with his aspiration to establish a "spiritual center in the Land of Israel" as a kind of Jewish Tikkun, a center for Jewish culture. The second trend was that of socialist Zionism [...]. At the time, it had a three-dimensional goal: to create a haven for the Jewish socialist proletariat in Palestine, to establish a center of socialist influence in the Middle East, and to actualize the vision of contemporary socialism within the framework of the Palestine Mandate. The third trend was political Zionism, headed by three great leaders: Theodor Herzl, Max Nordau, and Ze'ev Jabotinsky. This Zionism championed the revival of the modern Hebrew state, its historical borders, its government, its army, and Zionism. The first two Zionist trends rejected the idea of establishing a Hebrew state in the Land of Israel as a matter of principle [...]. Synthetic-practical Zionists did not see any need to create a Jewish majority in the country, and they also vehemently opposed the demands for independence and Jewish sovereignty voiced by political Zionists. To establish a "spiritual center" there was no need for a majority. [...]

Those who saw the struggle for the rebirth of an independent Hebrew state as a provocation to British rule and the status of the Arabs were therefore careful not to take steps that might be interpreted as "provocation." They were also deterred from aspiring to revive the Hebrew seamanship and to cultivate the merchant fleet, the Hebrew Navy and a Hebrew fishing fleet. The Socialist camp in Eretz Israel had another reason to draw their attention away from the idea of the revival of the Hebrew seamanship: their sole concern was to foster kibbutz movement in Israel. Since the kibbutzim were not economically viable, it was necessary to invest most in them. If funds were to be invested in renewing the Hebrew seamanship, then the share of the kibbutzim would have been lacking.45

The Zionist activist and journalist Itamar Ben Avi (1885-1943) is best known among most Israelis as the son of the famous linguist Elizier Ben-Yehuda and for being considered to be the first Hebrew native speaker. Much less is known, however, about the flirtation Ben Avi had with Revisionist ideas and his admiration of the Italian conception of the state. As initiator and chief editor of the daily newspaper Doar HaYom (1920-1933), Ben Avi travelled to Italy in 1919 describing in his columns his indirect encounter with Benito Mussolini during a political rally. As Dan Tamir and Ouzi Elyada have shown, Ben Avi and his sensationalist newspaper contributed considerably to the emergence of a strong leader cult within the Yishuv. Together with his colleague and Italian correspondent Hayim Vardi, he wrote numerous articles about the March on Rome and the following political events without hiding the sympathies for the new Italian charismatic leader and statesman. Moreover, as admirer of maritime culture and ancient seafaring culture, he found much inspiration in Italian notions of the Mediterranean, “mare nostrum,” seeing the ancient Israelis as part and parcel of the historical Roman-Mediterranean culture. These visions, we argue, ultimately found their way into his politics, envisioning a “Judea Canton” (kanton Yehuda) as the nucleolus of a future, vast self-governing Jewish polity.

- [add quotes from Ben-Avi]
- Jabotinsky starting to feel he’s loosening control over his own movement.
- Avraham Stern
- Avrham Stern’s desire to collaborate with Mussolini continued after his sojourn in Italy. Founder in 1940 of Lehi (Lohamei Herut Israel), an offshoot of the Irgun that rejected the armistice with the British during WWII, he deliberately ignored the anti-Semitic laws promulgated by

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Mussolini planning to transform the future State of Israel into a satellite of the Axis powers with the so-called “Jerusalem Agreement” written by the Lehi command on August 1940.48

Both Israeli and Italian historians emphasize some theoretical and practical similarities between Zionist-Revisionism and Fascism such as the central role of the youth organizations and their militarization, the cult of the leadership, the historical function of the bourgeoisie, and the anti-socialist attitude of the two movements.49 More recently, the Italian historian Vincenzo Pinto, have revealed that the contacts between the revisionists and Mussolini’s regime were based on the shared purpose of undermining the British influence in the Middle East rather than on ideological common denominators.50 Despite the abovementioned parallelisms, as Pinto argues, “the flirtation between Italy and Revisionism did not give substance to a strong realistic ‘marriage of interest’ because of the gap existing between imago and res,” i.e. between the respective ostensible representations, the real political strength of the Revisionists, and the cynical oscillations of Mussolini’s foreign policy.51 Going beyond this unbridgeable gap, this paper o takes in consideration these depictions analyzing the perspective of the revisionist organic intellectuals from both the Palestinian and the Italian

48 See “Jerusalem Agreement,” clauses of the agreement between Lehi command and the Italians concerning the future of Eretz Israel, Jabotinsky Institute Archive, K5 – 4/1; and “Proposal for Agreement on Zionist Plan of Action During the War,” JI, G6 – 16/1.
standpoint. While much has been written regarding Jabotinsky, Avraham Stern, and other prominent figures of the Revisionist family, relatively few monographs have been published about the perspective of the Italian militants.\textsuperscript{52} In fact, despite Isacco Sciaky and Leone Carpi could rightly be considered the main Italian Zionist-revisionist theorists, only recently the academic works of Vincenzo Pinto and Bruno di Porto have highlighted the legacy of these two influential intellectuals.\textsuperscript{53} Official revisionist representatives at the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs and authors of books and articles in several Italian Zionist newspapers, Isacco Sciaky and Leone Carpi attempted to bridge the gap between \textit{imago} and \textit{res}, enhancing the debate about the Italian State model within the Zionist project.\textsuperscript{54} The emergence of these important historical figures implies that research on this topic is far from finished.

\textbf{Part III: Sinn Féin, the language of anti-colonial revolt}

[section to be completed]

Sooner than others, Ahimeir was quick to grasp the power of the Irish analogy. A man of words, he was among the first to start accusing the British of deceit and duplicity, helping to insert the Anglophobic slogan “Perfidious Albion” into Hebrew, and became particularly fond of the term “Sinn Féin,” literally meaning “We Ourselves,” which he appointed as the substitute of mainstream Zionist strategy of collaboration with the British. In an article published in Ha’aretz in November 1927, shortly after the tenth anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, he drew a direct line connecting Hillel the Elder’s famous dictum, “\textit{Im ein ani li, mi li?}” (“If I am not for myself, then who will be for me?”), which


also appeared as the motto of Leon Pinsker’s famous pamphlet, *Autoemancipation*, with the Irish republican slogan, declaring that time has come for Zionist to adopt “the Losung of the new Irish movement, the *Losung* of ‘Sinn Féin’,” to put the era of socialist pioneering behind and to put in place a generation of national revolutionaries.”

However, the Irish analogy appears more frequently in later years, particular in light of the debates over the 1937 partition plan, which convinced may that the situation in Palestine could be better understood if read in comparison to Ireland, the first site and the *locus classicus* of partition:

[complete paragraph]

The Irish republican political language had a clear political function. It was used against any attempt to thinking of political constellation falling short of an independent nation-state – federal or confederal arrangement, an autonomy or Dominion under British auspices – and to turn the mistrust of the British mandatory authorities into an open call for armed rebellion, modeled after the 1916 Easter Rising and the Irish Civil War. It differed from Leninist tactics of Revolution and operatic fascist marches on Rome and cults of Il Duce. It was about an unyielding republicanism coupled with a new tactic of struggle – based on sustained and systematic attempt to generate terror. Ultimately, during the 1940s the “anonymous soldiers” – the members of the paramilitary underground organizations *Etzel* (*Irgun Tzvai Leumi*) and *Lehi*, relied on this language and tactic of revolt far more than any Russian or Italian revolutionary slogans.

Key points:

- Comparisons with Ireland became more frequent in the context of the debates over the 1937 partition plan. This debate flash out the similarity between the cases, and the shared British imperial context.

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55 Ahimeir, Abba. "Im Ein Ani Li, Mi Li? [Hebrew: If I Am Not for Myself, Then Who Will Be for Me?]." *Ha’aretz*, November 15 1927.
• Engage with the slim body of literature which addressed this similarity: Shlomit Eliash\textsuperscript{56} and Aiden Beatty.\textsuperscript{57}

• Add the references to Ireland became more frequent in articles which appeared in Ittmar Ben-Avi’s newspaper, Doa’r Hayom. Ben-Avi himself ambivalent.

• Translation of chapter 1 from P. S. O’Hegarty, \textit{The Victory of Sinn Féin: How It Won It and How It Used It}. Into Hebrew: the chapter described the Easter Rising as a failure, but emphasized – it created the Martyrs that were needed for the revolution.

• The shift in emphasis: from Malchut to “Harugei ha’Malchut” (Martyrs)

• Unlike earlier phases, the bold, anti-British terrorist message attracts non-Ashkenazi Jews. In the list of “Harugei ha’Malchut” (Martyrs) – a term the Revisionist movement began using to describe the members of the Lehi and Etzel executed by the British authorities, echoing the name that was given to the martyr rabbis killed by the Romans and the destruction of the Second Temple – we find many non-Ashkenazi freedom fighters:
  o Eliyahu Hakim (born in Lebanon, involved in the Lord Moyn assassination, executed in Cairo in March 1945)
  o Eliyahu Bet-Zuri (born in Tel-Aviv, family from non-Ashkenazi origins)
  o Mordechai Alkahi (born to parents who immigrated from Turkey)
  o Eliezer Kashani
  o Moshe Barazani (distinguished Iraqi family)


[section to be completed.]

(Non-conclusive) conclusion: The Politics of Comparison in Zionist History

What did the Revisionist radicals have in mind? This paper suggests that the political imagination should be read against the backdrop of the history of European anti-liberal, authoritarian politics while at the same time taking into consideration strong intra-imperial dynamic which brings with it a certain “horizon of expectations.” Intra-imperial comparisons, or what we may term instead as “analogical imagination,” play a central role in the process of radicalization. Historians of the British Empire will not find this surprising. They often identified and recorded the tendency, willingness and ability to infer colonial and imperial policies from trans-local comparisons. The ability to identify similarities and to draw such analogies was a central tool in political claim-making and episteme. Herein lies also the wide gap between Jabotinsky and his disobedient children: Jabotinsky’s worldview was grounded, ultimately, in an imperial episteme, and he was not that far removed from British colonial administrators and imperial thinkers for whom comparisons was a central tool, and integral part of colonial governmentality. \footnote{See Amir Goldstein’s article on Begin and the Mizrahi vote} The radicals, similarly, also searched for negative “precedents” to be avoided and positive “models” to be imitated. They reconstructed a different episteme, showing the way in which comparisons with Ireland and Fascist Italy started to replace older pro-imperial
and liberal mode of thinking, in which the Revisionist project was perceived as part of a project of growing colonial self-government. Their episteme relied on trans-local and trans-temporal comparisons of a different kind – with Soviet Russia, fascist Italy, and the Free Irish State. At the very same time, they were also creative commentators and interpreters of Jabotinsky’s teaching. They searched for the origins of an uncompromising, violent and revolutionary anti-colonial revolt in Jabotinsky’s speeches. Ultimately, the succeeded. As one historian put it, “[i]f Jabotinsky’s prose was open to multiple interpretations in his lifetime, if was more flexible following his death.”

The personal biographies: Revisionists found themselves marginalized in post-independence years.

- Sciaky’s political philosophy was maybe the most systematic from all the members of the group, but it had little impact. He immigrated to Palestine in 1939, and later found his living as lecturer at the academic career at the Tel Aviv Institute of Law and Economy (later to become the Law Faculty of the Tel-Aviv University) and as pedagogical director of the “Shalva” high school in Tel Aviv. He later became legal adviser at the newborn Israeli Ministry of Justice, becoming member of the committee for the compilation of the Israeli constitution, which never took off. From 1959 to 1963 he will be a professor at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

- Carpi remained in Italy after the promulgation of the Italian racial laws. He left when the war broke out but moved back after the 1943 armistice, working for the Legislative Office at the Ministry of Industry Trade and Labor. After the Revisionist party re-entered into the World Zionist Organization in 1947, he was elected as its Italian representative. He kept this position until 1956, when he immigrated to Israel with his family. During those years, he collaborated with numerous Italian magazines and newspapers (Israel, Bollettino della Comunità di Milano, Rassegna Mensile di Israel, Nuova Antologia, Rivista di Studi Politici

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60 Heller, Jabotinsky’s Children, 249.
Internazionali) becoming also president of the “Dante Alighieri” in Jerusalem.

The story of the Radicalization of the Zionist political language is echoed in the ambiguous political language that was adopted in post-statehood years also outside the Revisionist circles. I referred above to the fact that the expression “Kingdom of Israel”, “malchut Israel”, made its first appearances in the writings of the maximalists. But this is also a source of an ongoing semantic confusion that is characteristic of many of the scholarly discussions of the term “Mamlakhtiyut” – a key word in Ben Gurion’s post-1948 political speeches – which is derived from the biblical Hebrew term for “kingdom” but is sometimes understood as “statism,” and in other cases as republicanism, never as monarchy.61

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