STUART COHEN

English Zionists and British Jews

The Communal Politics of Anglo-Jewry, 1896-1920

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For Tova

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Preface

Jewish history is necessarily heterogeneous. The Jewish people does possess common traditions, but it has not inherited a common past. The only pivotal events in which the entire congregation of Israel is known to have participated were biblical: the receipt of the Law at Sinai, the entry into the Promised Land under Joshua, and the establishment of the Kingdom of David. Even the destruction of the second temple in 70 C.E. materially and immediately affected the everyday lives of but a portion of the Jewish people of the time. The subsequent dispersion—although undoubtedly the predominant theme of all postbiblical Jewish history—confirmed the fragmentary nature of the Jewish experience. Specifically, throughout their exile the Jews possessed few focal (and no all-embracing) political institutions. Individual communities developed distinctive patterns of political association which, despite their overall adherence to a recognizably Jewish political tradition, were framed as specific responses to the peculiarities of their different situations. Such divergences did not, of course, result in utter disintegration. Rabbinic law and lore continued to act as one unifying influence; the pervading phenomenon of persecution provided another. Nevertheless, the separate development of Jewish communities was persistently shaped by their diverse intellectual, political, economic, and migratory experiences. These perforce precluded total uniformity in the political reactions of all Jews to emergent situations over which they exercised no unitary control.

Political Zionism attempted to change all that. For Zionists, the notion that the Jews constitute one people, and therefore ought to act as such, is fundamental. The prescription is stressed in the first chapter of Herzl's *Der Judenstaat* and became a standard litany in the orthodox canon of Zionist literature thereafter. It

is integral to the observation that a Jewish 'problem' is an inevitable feature of Diaspora life, for which the only solution is the establishment of an independent Jewish State. But the very force of this doctrinaire thesis tends to complicate the task of the historian who would wish to record and reconstruct any stage of Zionist progress. He cannot ignore the tension between the all-embracing diagnosis of the Jewish condition proposed by his subject and the forces of intra-Jewish particularism that it struggles to contain. Neither can he disregard the chronological discontinuities and geographical variations that have characterized the checkered chronicle of Zionist fortunes. The rise of modern Jewish nationalism cannot be regarded simply as an inevitable consummation of the Jews' ancient messianic yearnings. Traditional liturgies, legal codes, and legends undoubtedly preserved the link between the Jews and the Holy Land. Yet there remains a significant gulf between the orthodox version of Redemption as an act of God, marking a reconciliation between the Jew and his Maker, and the mainstream *political* Zionist concept that Jewish nationhood would essentially redress relations between the Jews and the nations of the earth, and largely be the work of man. Furthermore, not all of the signposts of modern Jewish history pointed toward political Zionism; several led down very different paths. In the West, the most pronounced of Jewry's responses to the intoxicating circumstances of the nineteenth century were acculturalization, assimilation, and religious reform. In eastern Europe, the dominant radical reactions to the intimidating events of the same period were migration westwards and/or revolutionary activity. The extent to which individual Jews were prepared to embark on a particular journey—and the fact that the vast majority, of their own volition, rejected the Zionist route—reflected several circumstances, not the least relevant of which were the cultural, social, and political atmospheres pervading their separate points of departure. Their behavior merely confirmed the degree to which the history of Zionism was tethered to the grainy particularity of various Jewish experiences.

Why individual Jews supported or opposed the Zionist claim to territorial independence is not, then, a question that would

appear entirely amenable to generic analysis. To say that is obviously not to disparage the contributions of those scholars who have compiled synoptic accounts (the most helpful of which is David Vital's *The Origins of Zionism*, Oxford, 1975). Without their broad conceptualization, we would find it difficult to appreciate the comprehensive outlook of Zionism's founding fathers and the transcommunal impact of their movement. There is, however, a case to be made for a complementary, second-tier approach, one that might focus specifically on the mechanics of the process whereby what was universal in the appeal of political Zionism was welded to what was singular in the circumstances of particular Jewish communities. By postulating the idiosyncratic features of Jewish communal life, this perspective might facilitate our understanding of the interaction between the message that political Zionism proclaimed to the Jews as a collective and the response of Jews as members of different units. Such is the structure of argument underlying the present work. No claim is here made that the pattern followed by Anglo-Jewry was unique; readers will, no doubt, find analogous themes and trends elsewhere. But my own discussion has, deliberately, been less ambitious.

□

As is so often said to be the case, the idea for this book originated in a conversation held in an Oxford Common Room. It was over a decade ago that Lord Alan Bullock, the Master of St. Catherine's College, asked me why political Zionism had taken such a long time to become a powerful force in Anglo-Jewish politics. Ill-equipped to answer him at the time, I was prevented from attempting to do so in an academic fashion during the following years by other pursuits and concerns. I trust, however, that the present belated reply will indicate the extent of my gratitude for his stimulation. The other debts that I have incurred during the course of my research are of more recent origin, but are equally substantial. Most obviously is this so in the case of the custodians and officials of the libraries and archives in which I received permission to work: in Israel, the Central Zionist Archives and

Jewish National Library (both in Jerusalem), and the Weizmann Archives (Reḥovot); in London, the Public Record Office, the British Museum, the Mocatta Library, the Board of Deputies, the United Synagogue, the Federation of Synagogues, the Sephardi Congregation, and the Jewish Board of Guardians (now the Jewish Welfare Board); in New York, the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, the Jewish Theological Seminary, the New York Public Library, and the Zionist Archives; in Cincinnati, the American Jewish Archives. In each case, the unfailing patience and habitual courtesy of the staffs measurably increased the pleasures of historical research. Professor Basil Loewe, Miss May Maccoby, and Mr. Abraham Schischa (all of London) kindly allowed me to consult material in their private possession; Mr. Pinḥas Chen and Mrs. Chasya Kaplan (both of Jerusalem) helped with some of the research, and Miss Sarah Lederhendler with the typing.

Throughout, the Research Authority of Bar-Ilan University was most supportive, providing successive and generous grants between 1974 and 1977. Thanks are also due to the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture, and the Israel Commission for Basic Research.

Without in any way avoiding sole responsibility for the style and substance of my presentation, I record with gratitude the advice, encouragement, and—above all—the criticisms received from those scholars to whom I turned for information and guidance: Professor Chimen Abramsky (University College, London), Professor Lionel Kochan (Warwick University), Dr. Aubrey Newman (Leicester University), Professor Meir Vereté (The Hebrew University, Jerusalem), Professor David Vital (Tel-Aviv University), and Professors Daniel Elazar, Charles Liebman, Avrom Saltman, and Andrew Sharf (all of Bar-Ilan). Especially welcome, during the last tricky stages, was the valuable counsel—graciously offered and promptly rendered—of Mrs. Joanna Hitchcock and Ms. Marilyn Campbell, both of Princeton University Press.

My greatest debt, and one that is impossible to specify, is to my wife and our sons.

Bar-Ilan University, Ramat-Gan, Israel
May 1981 *Nisan 5741*

Abbreviations

AJA	Anglo-Jewish Association
CZA	Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem, Israel
DEPS	Archives of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, London
Diaries	*The Complete Diaries of Theodor Herzl.* Edited by Raphael Patai. Translated by Harry Zohn. 5 vols. New York, 1960
EZF	English Zionist Federation
Ito	Jewish Territorial Organisation
JC	*Jewish Chronicle,* London
JQR	*Jewish Quarterly Review,* London
Letters	*The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann. Series A: Letters.* Edited by Meyer Weisgal et al. 23 vols. Oxford, London, and Jerusalem, 1969-1980
TJHSE	*Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England,* London
WA	Weizmann Archives, Reḥovot, Israel

ENGLISH ZIONISTS AND BRITISH JEWS

Introduction

THE ZIONIST ORGANISATION was founded in 1897 in order to secure the establishment (some might have said the reconstruction) of "a Jewish homeland openly recognised, legally secured." That remained its central purpose until the foundation of the State of Israel in 1948. During the intervening period, two major obstacles impeded the fulfilment of Zionism's political ambitions. Broadly speaking, one was external: the relevant Great Powers were reluctant to sanction autonomous Jewish control over a portion of the Middle East; the Arab inhabitants of the region were invariably, and often violently opposed to such a prospect. The second was internal: the political Zionists were always a minority party within world Jewry. Only a fraction of the entire Jewish people have emigrated to *Erez Yisrael* ("The Land of Israel"); only since World War II have most Jews—even in the free world—taken the more symbolic step of contributing to Zionist funds or participating in the movement's ancillary activities. A significant proportion remained either indifferent toward political Zionism or, in the more interesting cases, avowedly opposed to its thesis. Ultimately, the internal and external problems were clearly related. Zionist leaders could best lay claim to a land "in the name of the Jewish people" if they could demonstrate that they did indeed represent the main body of world Jewry. But the order of priorities was usually reversed. Weizmann and Ben Gurion, no less than Herzl, largely subordinated the campaign for the support of Jewry to the struggle for international recognition. Given success in the diplomatic arena, it was argued, domestic Jewish opposition was bound to succumb.

Historians of Zionism have often followed that lead, particularly when recounting the relations between the Zionist move-

ment and the British government. Several studies concentrate on the negotiations that led to the publication of the Balfour Declaration in 1917; many more elaborate on the subsequent record of contacts between the Jewish Agency and the mandatory regime in Palestine.[1] By comparison, very little attention has been paid to the ebb and flow of Zionist fortunes within Anglo-Jewry.[2] The omission is surprising. As is often acknowledged, the reservations of some Jews in Britain with regard to the propriety of political Zionism did occasionally threaten to influence the attitude of the British government.[3] It is also misleading. The intracommunal debate on Zionism was not detached from other contemporary currents in Anglo-Jewish life; it reflected, and fostered, the existence of exogenous conflicts and tensions. Representatives of all shades of communal opinion discussed the theme

[1] Always a popular subject of polemic, the prehistory and history of the Mandate period has attained the status of an industry with the opening of the relevant diplomatic archives. No bibliography can keep pace with the studies now pouring off the presses; for a recent attempt (necessarily incomplete, but nevertheless adequate) see Howard M. Sachar, *A History of Israel* (Jerusalem, 1976), pp. 846-61.

[2] Two exceptions, both very thin and now rather dated, are: Marvin J. Goldfine, "The Growth of Zionism in England up to the World War" (Master's thesis, Columbia University, 1939); and Paul Goodman, *Zionism in England, 1899-1949* (London, 1949). See also, Virginia H. Hein, "The British Followers of Theodor Herzl: English Zionist Leaders, 1896-1904" (Ph.D. dissertation, Georgia State University, 1978). Other communities in the Western world have merited much fuller and more comprehensive treatment: e.g., Jehuda Reinharz, *Fatherland or Promised Land: The Dilemma of the German Jew, 1893-1914* (Ann Arbor, 1975); Stephen M. Poppel, *Zionism in Germany, 1897-1933* (Philadelphia, 1977); Michael R. Marrus, *The Politics of Assimilation* (on France) (Oxford, 1971); Yonathan Shapiro, *Leadership of the American Zionist Organization, 1897-1930* (Urbana, 1971), and Melvin I. Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust* (New York, 1975).

[3] One famous example is the furor caused by the Conjoint Foreign Committee's anti-Zionist manifesto in 1917 (on which see Leonard Stein, *The Balfour Declaration* [London, 1961], and below pp. 238-44). Another is hinted at in Winston Churchill's letter to Israel Zangwill of 13 July 1906. "Further there is the undoubted division among the Jews themselves, which seems to have impressed itself even upon some of those . . . who were strenuous in your support." Jerusalem, Central Zionist Archives [hereafter CZA], Files of the Jewish Territorial Organization [hereafter Ito files], A36/19a.

of Jewish nationalism, which was seen as impinging upon the widest spectrum of their religious, social, and political beliefs. Hence debates on the topic were usually uninhibited and—for many of the participants—crucial. They were rarely conducted in an intellectual or political vacuum. The English Zionist Federation grew out of a polygenetic communal background with which it reacted and which it also tried to shape. In many ways, the history of its supporters and opponents is that of the community at large. The purpose of the present introduction is not to compress a survey of either Anglo-Jewry or of Zionism into the space of a few pages. It aims, rather, to direct attention to those aspects of both considered relevant to an account of why some members of the community accepted, and others rejected, the principles and practices advocated by Herzl and his local lieutenants.

In Anglo-Jewry, as elsewhere, Love of Zion had been given practical expression some time before the advent of political Zionism. It had also assumed a degree of institutional form. Admittedly, the Jews of the British Isles made only a marginal contribution to the pioneering labors and writings which were ultimately to affect the course of their people's history. Intellectually, as much as geographically, the community hovered on the periphery of postmedieval Jewish life, its members reacting to Continental currents in Jewish self-consciousness rather than trying to shape them. But in matters affecting Zion Anglo-Jewry did possess the advantage of a uniquely favorable gentile environment. Influential segments of Christian society in Britain had long been receptive to the prospect of a revival of the historic connection between the Children of Israel and the Land of the Bible. The literary public of Victorian England was still affected by the residual influence of earlier millenarian visions of a Second Coming. Throughout the period, it was also supplied with more recent—and usually less eschatological—jogs to its scriptural memories. An entire school of travellers, Orientalists, archeologists, artists, and writers of fiction gave prominence to both the Holy Land and its ancient inhabitants. In so doing (according to some accounts) they generated a form of proto-Zionism which was to

play an important role in the confluence of Israel's fortunes with those of Albion. Strategic considerations, it has been argued, pointed in much the same direction. Napoleon's campaigns in Egypt and southern Syria had provided startling evidence of the extent to which the movement of events in the Middle East might threaten British rule in India. The possibility that a friendly presence in Palestine—even a Jewish presence—might serve as a bulwark of Britain's position in the region had begun to play upon elements of the official mind long before the partition of the Ottoman Empire was seriously contemplated in Whitehall.[4]

More specific, if somewhat less operatic, was Anglo-Jewry's own tradition of association with the old and newer Jewish settlements in *Erez Yisrael*. As much is acknowledged by the standard Zionist genealogies. They all pay due homage to the projects and proposals initiated in Ottoman Palestine by Sir Moses Montefiore, the banker and communal worker who made the first of his seven journeys to the country in 1827 and the last, when he was ninety, in 1874. Honorifically designated a "great pioneer" in Naḥum Sokolow's *History of Zionism* (published in 1919), he has since been extensively memorialized in the State of Israel—most recently by having his portrait adorn a one-shekel note. Historians of Petaḥ Tikva, the "mother" of modern Jewish settlements in *Erez Yisrael*, also acknowledge the remarkable contribution of Zeraḥ Barnett. This sturdy and successful East End furrier was one of the four men to found the village in 1878; during the course of twenty-seven subsequent trips to London, he also man-

[4] The theme is outlined in Naḥum Sokolow, *History of Zionism, 1600-1918*, 2 vols. (London, 1919), and Barbara Tuchman, *The Bible and the Sword: England and Palestine from the Bronze Age to Balfour* (New York, 1956). On specific strands: Harold Fisch, *Jerusalem and Albion: The Hebraic Factor in Seventeenth Century Literature* (London, 1964); Marvin Scult, *Millennial Expectations and Jewish Liberties* (Leiden, 1978); Michael McKeon, "Sabbetai Sevi in England," *Association of Jewish Studies, Review* 2 (1977):131-70; Meir Vereté, "Why was a British Consulate Established at Jerusalem?" *English Historical Review* 85 (1970):316-45; idem, "The Restoration of the Jews in English Protestant Thought, 1790-1840," *Middle Eastern Studies* 8 (1972):3-50; and Norman Bentwich and John M. Shaftesley, "Forerunners of Zionism in the Victorian Era," in *Remember the Days: Essays in Honour of Cecil Roth*, ed. John M. Shaftesley (London, 1966).

aged both to replenish his own diminished fortune and to arouse some Anglo-Jewish support for his penurious fellow colonists.[5] The memory of Col. Albert Edward Williamson Goldsmid is generally revered somewhat less, possibly because Zionist historiography does not quite know where to place him. Goldsmid did not become aware of his Jewish identity until comparatively late in his life, and always had a highly personal view of the past and future of his coreligionists. He has been severely depicted as a frustrated philanthropist and a demonstrative romantic ("I am Daniel Deronda" was his opening gambit when first meeting Herzl). Perhaps it would be more charitable to say that Goldsmid combined a sentimental fixation on his own origins with a sophisticated appraisal of the necessity for coordinated—even tutelary—activity in order to improve the lot of the Jewish people. By profession an officer in the British army, he had a flair for administration and a long-standing interest in Jewish settlement overseas. He first visited Palestine in 1883 and was appointed Director General of Baron Hirsch's colonies in the Argentine in 1892. Between these activities, Goldsmid prodded the Chovevei Zion [Lovers of Zion] Association of England to adopt a written constitution; he also drew up a plan for its organization that was a cross between standard military practice and his own understanding of the framework employed by the Children of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai: affiliated societies were dubbed "tents" (junior societies, "cadet tents"); they were led by "commanders" responsible to a "headquarters," and placed under the overall direction of a "chief"—a position that Goldsmid himself held after 1893.[6]

Anglo-Jewry's Chovevei Zion Association was not, however, entirely Goldsmid's own creation. Its origins have been traced to the more modest activities of a small group of early east European immigrants, who established Lovers of Zion societies in the wake of the atrocities in Russia in 1881-1882. Three fledgling groups

[5] Y. Ya'ari-Polsky, *Sefer Ha-Yovel Limlot Ḥamishim Shanah le-Yesod Petaḥ-Tikvah* (Tel-Aviv, 1929); Gershon Kressel, "Eim Ha-Moshavot: Petaḥ-Tikvah," *Cathedra* 9 (1978):12.

[6] The full constitution, printed in both Hebrew and English, dated 1892, in CZA, Files of the Chovevei Zion Association of England, A2/7(ii).

of this sort functioned in Tredegar, Leeds, and Manchester in 1883, and two gentlemen (one of whom was Zeraḥ Barnett) tangentially associated with an equally tiny London circle attended the European "conference" of Ḥovevei Ẓion at Kattowicz, in Silesia, in 1884. Thereafter, Palestinophile activities slowly gathered momentum and one milestone followed another with what appears to have been relentless, if uneven, regularity. The story has been fully chronicled elsewhere,[7] and can therefore be briefly summarized here. A short-lived Palestine Colonisation Association, consisting of about 250 members, was founded in London in 1885; a Kadimah ("Forward") society of some 150 younger spirits in 1887; a Chovevei Zion Society committed to more strenuous colonizing activity and largely composed of dissident elements from Kadimah followed in 1888; and the Chovevei Zion Association of England, amidst pomp and circumstance belying its nominal membership of about 450 families, held its first public meeting at the Jewish Working Men's Club in East London on 31 May 1890.

One significant feature of this unfolding record is the heterogeneous nature of the association's membership. The new movement was not an exclusively immigrant preserve; neither was Goldsmid the only native member of the community to venture into its fold. Recent arrivals, it is true, did provide whatever semblance there was of emotional commitment and numerical buoyancy. The East End Tent, always the largest, had a roll of over 1,500 members in 1893; they constituted much of the audience who came to hear the impassioned Chovevei Zion addresses regularly delivered by Rabbi Ḥayim Zundel Maccoby (the "Kamenitzer Maggid," come to London from Russia in January 1890), whose oratorical stamina soon became as famous as his Talmudic scholarship.[8] But Establishment figures, solidly rooted in the West End of London, also showed some interest. As much

[7] Most recently by Elḥanan Orren, *Ḥibat-Ẓion be-Britanyah, 1878-1898* (Tel-Aviv, 1974); an anecdotal history was published in the first eight issues of *Palestina, The Chovevei Zion Quarterly* (October 1892-June 1894).

[8] Max Mansky, ed., *Imrei Ḥayim* (Tel-Aviv, 1929), introduction; and the obituary by Israel Shapotshnick in *Rashei Alfei Yisrael* 5 (1916):3-7.

is evident from the muster of names who graced the platform of the Chovevei Zion's foundation meeting in 1890. Sir Samuel Montagu was there: he was, after all, patron of the Jewish Working Men's Club, president of the Federation of Synagogues (the umbrella organization that united in uneasy partnership numerous immigrant Orthodox *chevrot* in the East End), an eminent merchant banker, and Liberal M.P. for Whitechapel, where much of the capital's Jewish immigrant population was concentrated. Still more impressive was the presence of Lord Nathaniel Rothschild, president of the United Synagogue of established metropolitan Orthodox congregations and, of course, scion of one of the most remarkable families in modern Jewish history. Aged fifty in 1890 (eight years younger than Montagu), Lord "Natty" had been created the first Jewish peer just five years earlier and stood at the very pinnacle of Anglo-Jewish society. He was to continue to do so for the next twenty-five years—despite Montagu's commercial, communal, and political attainments (Montagu was not created Lord Swaythling until 1907). It was at Rothschild's urgings, so rumor had it, that Sir Benjamin Louis Cohen too had been induced to attend the meeting. This was an important addition. Besides being Conservative M.P. for East Islington, Cohen had since 1887 also been president of the Jewish Board of Guardians, the community's premier charity. By virtue of that office, he was almost as revered in Whitechapel as were Montagu and Rothschild. His presence provided yet another symbol of the West End's paternalistic interest in East End affairs. Perhaps it was in order to emphasize the links between the two worlds, and at the same time to stress the distance between them, that these lay dignitaries also brought to the meeting in their train a retinue of clerical luminaries: Rabbi Hermann Adler, who was very soon to succeed his late father as Chief Rabbi of the Ashkenazi community; Rabbi Moses Gaster, *Ḥakham* (principal minister) of the older, but smaller, Sephardi congregations; and Reverend Simeon Singer, the dignified minister of the New West End Synagogue in Bayswater Road, West London, who also served as court chaplain to the Rothschilds.

The imprimatur of these men seems to have provided the Cho-

vevei Zion Association with the necessary impetus. By 1891, an emblematic tent had been established in West London, and a conspicuous amount of political activity had been initiated. On 23 May of that year, the Chovevei Zion arranged for a monster demonstration to protest against the situation in Russia, which was attended by 4,000 sympathizers. Soon thereafter, Montagu presented Lord Salisbury with a petition, addressed to the Sublime Porte of the Ottoman Empire, listing in considerable detail the improvements that were desired in the facilities offered to Jewish colonists in Palestine. As a result of the enthusiasm thus aroused and of Goldsmid's administrative innovations, twenty new tents were established; a journal (*Palestina*, edited by Dr. Samuel A. Hirsch, senior tutor at Jews' College) began to appear; 24,000 acres of land were purchased on the Golan; and the colonies of Castinie and Benei Yehouda were formally "adopted."[9] In 1893, the association drew up a second petition, albeit decidedly more decorous in tone and content than the first, which was duly presented to Lord Rosebery.

It is tempting to regard these developments as the harbingers of more momentous tidings. But no intellectual or functional line can easily be traced from the tame proceedings of the Chovevei Zion Association to the rigorous agitation later promoted by the English Zionist Federation. Whilst the first object of the former, as heraldically inscribed on its stationery, was "to foster the National Idea in Israel," few of its senior members seriously pondered the precise nature of the ideology that they were supposed to be cultivating. Of all the tents, only the B'nei Zion (a small but vocal group of East Enders who affiliated to the Chovevei Zion Association in 1894) attempted to undertake cultural and financial work with the avowed purpose of restoring the entire Jewish people to its ancient homeland.[10] Otherwise, the purposes of the Chovevei Zion were interpreted in a far more circumscribed fashion. This was particularly true of the West End membership which increasingly, and perhaps inevitably, came to dominate its affairs.

[9] See reports on the colonies, dated 1895, by J. Prag, in CZA, Files of the Chovevei Zion Association, A2/7(i).

[10] Orren, *Ḥibat-Ẓion*, pp. 82-83 and 112-13.

Its spokesmen seem soon to have regretted their earlier activism and to shrink from suggestions that they repeat the efforts of 1891-1893. They wished the Association to invest far more energy in the promotion of proper English manners among its immigrant adherents, and far less in the propagation of abstract theories.[11] Furthermore, they insisted on working in conjunction with the apolitical Jewish Colonisation Association (Ica), established in Paris in 1894, and explicitly decried the maximalist program advocated by the firebrands of the B'nei Zion.

> Exaggerated statements have from time to time been put forward as to the aims of the Chovevei Zion societies [ran one circular], viz: that their object is to anticipate the fulfilment of prophesy by encouraging a wholesale immigration of Jews to Palestine. Such is not the aim or the idea of the Chovevei Zion.[12]

Accredited spokesmen for the movement hastened to stress that such statements did not imply any dimunition in their personal yearnings for Zion. But they did place definite limits on its official expression by the Association. Brazen claims to Palestine would merely arouse the suspicions of the Ottoman authorities, and thereby jeopardize the existing colonists in the country (said to be one untoward result of the 1891 and 1893 petitions). If articulated too specifically they would also implicitly conflict with other, more fundamental beliefs: that the condition of Jewry would improve with the universal diffusion of liberalism and emancipation (or, in some views, of social revolution); and that the Return to Zion would ultimately come about miraculously, and not as a result of an impatient and sinful dissatisfaction with the tardiness of the process. These were councils of restraint

[11] Paragraph six of the "Rules of the Chovevei Zion of England" specified that members "render cheerful obedience" to the laws of the land. See also the injunctions, in English and Yiddish, printed in a circular dated 26 May 1893, CZA, Files of the Chovevei Zion Association, A2/7(i).

[12] Circular dated February 1894, CZA, Files of the Chovevei Zion Association, A2/7(i). Also A.E.W. Goldsmid, "Modus Operandi," *Palestina* 5 (October, 1893):1-2.

which apparently explained why the vast majority of the community (native and immigrant) did not respond to the Association's appeals. They also accounted for the determination of its leaders to concentrate scrupulously on the attainment of minor ameliorations for the struggling pioneers in select Palestinian colonies.

Late nineteenth-century political Zionism presented the Jews of Britain, as elsewhere, with an entirely different ideology. As formulated by Theodor Herzl (the founder and first president of the World Zionist Organisation who, although not the first nor even the most intellectually distinguished proponent of the idea, was undoubtedly its most influential propagandist), modern Jewish nationalism disparaged the ethos of grim resignation enshrined in classic Orthodox immobilism. Exile, it claimed, was not a purgative experience; neither was deliverance to be a matter of grace. The advent of the millennium could legitimately be hastened by means that were not explicitly divine. At the same time, political Zionism also deflated the mythology of Diaspora messianism fostered by theorists of emancipation and religious reform. Pointing to the recrudescence of anti-Semitism in its racial and government-inspired forms throughout much of Europe, it argued the bankruptcy of the formula of cultural and social integration posited by Moses Mendelssohn in eighteenth-century Germany and advocated by subsequent devotees of a program of Diaspora *haskalah* (enlightenment). Instead, argued the Zionists, Jewry's situation was inherently unnatural: the Jew would not gain authentic citizenship by endeavoring to separate the religious from the national in his creed, still less by choosing (where permitted) the path of partial or total assimilation. Political independence within defined territorial boundaries represented the only relief. A multiplicity of scattered places of refuge, especially when dependent upon philanthropic condescension, would not meet the immense needs of the case. Jewish energies had to be harnessed to an avowedly national aim with the purpose of stimulating effective political action on an international scale.

Even thus baldly summarized, the doctrine was clearly an intellectual tour de force; it has properly been termed "revolution-

ary."[13] Left at the theoretical level, however, it need not have had the disruptive effect on Jewish communal life that it did. As much was evident from the muted reaction to the earlier writings of all the acknowledged Jewish "forerunners" of political Zionism (particulary Hess, Alkalai, Kalischer, and Pinsker). One lesson to be drawn from their experience was that the ventilation of innovative principles did not ensure that a significant number of Jews would respond to them—sympathetically or otherwise. Arguably, some allowance must be made for the passage of time;[14] still more for the pungent manner of Herzl's expression. Nevertheless, *Der Judenstaat*, as published, might have promoted nothing more than an inconsequential exchange of doctrinal set pieces: highly interesting in its own way and undoubtedly of importance to a limited circle, but essentially of little practical impact on the attitudes of most Jews toward their present and future condition. This was certainly so in Anglo-Jewry, where it was usual to observe certain formal niceties of debate. There was no linear progression from the sweet reasonableness which infused Herzl's initial reception in London to the intense personal distaste later aroused by his followers. Unless other catalysts are sought, his proposals alone do not adequately explain why all Jewish nationalists were eventually to be defined as "people with whom you never can argue & whom you never can trust," and anti-Zionists to be described as "men who have no honour or decency & must be watched at every turn."[15]

No single factor can explain why political Zionism became a cause of such friction. It was not the only, nor the first, source of tension within and across contemporary Jewish society. Modernism of various forms (a category that includes—where rele-

[13] Most recently by Harold Fisch, *The Zionist Revolution: A New Perspective* (Oxford, 1978); that, too, is the title of the Hebrew translation of David Vital's work.

[14] Hillel Halkin, "Zionism Revisited: The historic enterprise," *Commentary*, May 1973, pp. 74-77.

[15] 19 October 1921, C. Montefiore to L. Wolf, CZA, L. Wolf Papers, A77/3c; and 1 February 1918, J. Moser to C. Weizmann, Rehovot, Weizmann Archives [hereafter WA], file 1918(2).

vant—the *haskalah*, emancipation, and the experience of migration and economic diversity) was already generating rifts in the social and intellectual structure that characterized most medieval communities.[16] From this perspective, Zionism did not represent an autonomous outburst of radicalism. Rather, it was the outgrowth of contingent developments of varying importance clustered around a rapidly growing—but divergent—mood of dissent. Nevertheless, the Zionist Organisation, precisely because it was an organization, played a seminal role in the process of change. Inspired by Herzl's calculated theatricalism, it transformed an idea into a movement and posited an agenda for communal action that was as revolutionary as its ideology. It proclaimed its determination to convert Jewry to its cause, if necessary by a program of institutional displacement; at various congresses (themselves novel forms of Jewish association) it also established the bureaucratic machinery which potentially made such a transfer of communal authority possible. From the outset, the Zionists employed slogans and images that deliberately created an atmosphere of urgent clamor and thereby enhanced the immediacy of their appeal. They founded regional Zionist parties designed, not merely to propagate the thesis of Jewish nationalism, but also to bring into being the audience to which their appeals were addressed. By doing all of this, they introduced a new pattern of alignment into almost every community of the Diaspora. In Anglo-Jewry the resultant rift was to be expressed in its most acerbic form during the First World War.

> I should like to make clear the spirit and the purpose with which we approach your friends [wrote a leading local Zionist to a spokesman for the anti-Zionist camp]. We approach them as one power in Jewry addressing itself to another power in Jewry in the hope of securing a union of Jewish forces in this most critical hour of our people. We know that their cooperation would be extremely useful. We know that their op-

[16] David Vital, *The Origins of Zionism* (Oxford, 1975) is essential reading; see, too, Jacob Katz, *Tradition and Crisis* (Harvard, 1961) and *Out of the Ghetto* (Harvard, 1968).

position would be a serious hindrance—as we are also convinced that it would be treason against the Jewish people. We are prepared to make great sacrifices in order to secure their cooperation. We are determined to go forward even without them and against them. If they stand aside it will be for the future historian of the Jewish people to pass judgment on them. If they oppose us we shall, however reluctantly, do what within us lies to destroy any authority they may claim in Jewry or beyond Jewry to speak for the Jewish people. We know we have the power to do it.[17]

So audacious was the Zionists' intention (and so conspicuous their success) that there has been a powerful tendency to select Jewish nationalists as subjects of detailed treatment, leaving their opponents in a state of oblivion. Significant gaps in the source material relating to Jewish anti-Zionism might provide one explanation. Much (although not all) of the opposition was latent and hence inarticulate, and therefore difficult to identify or analyze. But the key factor seems to be a conscious or unconscious type of Whig history. The "forces of innovation" are singled out for attention and examined with sympathy; the "forces of inertia" are neglected and their attitude hardly explored at all. This situation is to be regretted, not only because it produces a lopsided picture, but principally because it does violence to the *political* texture of the struggle between those who supported and rejected Herzl's program. An excessive concentration on the accelerators and a comparative lack of interest in the brakes have obscured the workings of the system as a whole. They have also distorted the strategies of both parties. The Zionists, after all, enthusiastically pitched themselves into a shrill contest for communal authority, and it is therefore within the context of the communal structure that their program has to be scrutinized.

At that level of analysis, the anti-Zionists would appear to dodge some of the more severe indictments regularly trundled out in Zionist demonologies. Anglo-Jewish resistance to the Zionists

[17] 1 December 1914, H. Sacher to L. Wolf, London, Board of Deputies of British Jews [hereafter DEPS], Zionism 1914-1916, E3/204(1).

is not necessarily to be equated with opposition to Zionism. The latter could reflect only a disagreement with a particular prognosis of the Jewish condition; the former could also entail a divergent commitment to the need for changes in the management of Jewish affairs. Programmatically, however, the two could converge. Anti-Zionism yoked together several competing, and even radically opposed, views of the meaning of the Jewish experience. What united its exponents, albeit in an uneasy and uncoordinated fashion, was their shared antagonism to the prospect of a Zionist domination over the community's affairs. Conversely, the Zionists often managed to overcome their own ideological and personal differences by clinging to the hope that they were on the way to attaining commanding communal authority. The tussle between the two camps and their respective fellow travellers was thus not always over categorical principles. The movement of events after 1897 was also influenced by the pragmatic attempts of the protagonists to reconcile their ideological rhetoric with their communal ambitions.

With such considerations in mind, the present study will attempt to serve three main purposes. The first, and most straightforward, is to chronicle the respective fortunes of the Anglo-Jewish Zionists and their opponents during the embryonic period of the movement. In so doing it will, secondly, aim to identify the various interests and groups within the community which chose either to facilitate or to obstruct the growth of political Zionism. Finally, and perhaps most important of all, it will attempt an analysis of the principal issues that the two sides considered to be at stake. These, we will suggest, were bifurcate. The Jews of Britain, as of other communities, did conduct several fundamental debates on the substantive merits of Herzl's thesis (which form the subject of the longest chapter in the present book). But such ideologically relevant dialogues were often influenced—sometimes decisively—by their perceived relevance to a simultaneous struggle for influence and prestige within the community at large. Hence, the study of Zionism in Anglo-Jewry is to some extent a study of the deployment of political argument

and of political agitation within a communal setting of fissiparous tensions and shifting alliances.

The concentration on the intra-Jewish dynamics of the debate is, then, deliberate; and it has dictated the choice of terminal dates for this essay. Before the advent of political Zionism, the notion of Jewish nationalism played only a peripheral role in the affairs of Anglo-Jewry. Its advocates were few; their program was indeterminate. This was as true of their attitude toward their own society as of their policy with regard to Palestinian settlement. The Chovevei Zion Association did not formulate a thoroughgoing strategy of communal action; neither did it develop a systematic structure of social and political analysis which might have galvanized others into doing so. The reasons lie in the intentionally restricted perspectives of the Association's leadership. Not even at the height of their influence, in the mid-1890s, did the members of the Headquarters Tent project the image of men in possesssion of a comprehensive and independent view on those issues that were of major concern to the politically articulate sections of the community at large. They seemed to be curiously detached from several of the organic tensions which, by the end of the nineteenth century, were clearly affecting the quiescence of Anglo-Jewish life.[18] That, at least, was the contemporary impression fostered by an analysis of the composition of the Association's membership. *Ḥibat Ẓion* did attract some representatives of the native community's burgeoning middle class who had taken root in Hampstead and Bayswater: Joseph Prag, a pipe manufacturer who was elected vice-chief of the Association in 1892 is one example; Herbert Bentwich, a lawyer of whom considerably more will be heard, is another. But the organization did

[18] The standard work on the Anglo-Jewish community of the period remains Vivian D. Lipman, *Social History of the Jews in England, 1850-1950* (London, 1954); see too Israel Finestein's articles, "The New Community, 1880-1915," in *Three Centuries of Anglo-Jewish History*, ed. Vivian D. Lipman (London, 1961) and "The Lay Leadership of the United Synagogue since 1870" in *A Century of Anglo-Jewish Life*, ed. Salmond S. Levin (London, 1970). Supplementary family histories in Chaim Bermant, *The Cousinhood* (London, 1971). For the earlier community, Todd M. Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England, 1714-1830* (Philadelphia, 1979).

not respond to the growing discrepancy between the professional, political, and personal interests of men of this type and those of the "Grand Dukes" of the City. Furthermore, the Chovevei Zion Association's leadership was entirely London-oriented. Its provincial constituency, although not insignificant, did not seem to exert an influence commensurate with the protean diversity of communal life in the northern and western parts of the country.[19] Most important of all, the Chovevei Zion did not offer a distinctive—or particularly imaginative—method of coping with the unprecedented rate of Jewish immigration to Britain from eastern Europe. Between 1880 and 1914 almost 150,000 Jews arrived from the Continent (approximately two-thirds before the passage of the Aliens Act in 1905); largely as a result of this influx, and of the high birthrate of the new arrivals, the existing Anglo-Jewish population of some 60,000 souls quintupled, with specifically immigrant Jewish quarters growing up in the East End of London and several provincial cities and towns. Long before the outbreak of World War I, these phenomena had begun to exert obvious strains on the entire cultural, social, and institutional fabric of the community; they had also provoked sporadic outbursts of anti-Semitism.[20] At a very shallow level, the Chovevei Zion did claim to constitute a bridge between Anglo-Jewry's two communities—the native and the immigrant.[21] But that was about all. As a body, the Association provided no recognizable alternative to the attitude of ambivalence habitually displayed toward the recent arrivals by the indigents; on the emergence of what was euphemistically termed anti-alienism in the press and at Westminster, its official pronouncements maintained an embarrassed silence.

[19] E.g., "The Manchester Questions," *Palestina* 5 (October 1893): 8-11.

[20] The authoritative and indispensable work on the immigrant is Lloyd P. Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrant in England 1870-1914*, 2nd ed. (London, 1973). On reactions to immigration see John A. Garrard, *The English and Immigration, 1880-1910* (London, 1971); Bernard Gainer, *The Alien Invasion: The Origins of the Aliens Act of 1905* (London, 1972), and Steven Bayme, "Jewish Leadership and Anti-Semitism in Britain, 1898-1918" (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1977).

[21] Orren, *Ḥibat-Ẓion*, pp. 67-70.

Altogether, the Chovevei Zion Association was never more than an insignificant—and potentially evanescent—cog in the far larger wheel of multifarious philanthropic, cultural, synagogal, and representative institutions with which the community abounded. The occasional activities of its members did not impinge upon proceedings at the councils of the United Synagogue, the Sephardi Congregation, the West London Synagogue of Reform Jews, or even the Federation of Synagogues where Maccoby was employed as an itinerant preacher.[22] Neither did their marginal subventions to small colonies in Palestine affect the preference of the Jewish Board of Guardians (founded in 1859) and the Russo-Jewish Committee (founded in 1891) for the alternative policies of outdoor relief for the immigrants or, more radically, of repatriating them to their eastern European countries of origin. Above all, the pale sentimentality of the Chovevei Zion did not intrude upon the sober deliberations of the Board of Deputies and the Anglo-Jewish Association. The former (founded as the London Committee of the Deputies of the British Jews in 1760, when Sephardim and Ashkenazim decided to repair the anomaly of their separate deputations to congratulate King George III on his accession) remained the community's only "parliament" of congregations; as such, it possessed a virtually exclusive commission to tackle the day-to-day issues of Anglo-Jewry's relations with its gentile environment. The Anglo-Jewish Association (founded in 1871 when, as a result of the Franco-Prussian War, the Alliance Israelite Universelle was in a state of temporary eclipse) similarly retained its position as the principal channel of

[22] Cecil Roth, *The Federation of Synagogues. A Record of Twenty-five Years, 1912-1937* (London, 1937), pp. 7-8. For the institutional structure of Anglo-Jewry see, in general, Maurice Freedman, ed., *A Minority in Britain* (London, 1955), and Vivian D. Lipman, "Synagogal Organisation in Anglo-Jewry," *Jewish Journal of Sociology* 1 (1959):80-93. Among the specific studies are: Vivian D. Lipman, *A Century of Social Service, 1859-1959: The History of the Jewish Board of Guardians* (London, 1959); Bernard Homa, *A Fortress in Anglo-Jewry* (London, 1953); Albert M. H. Hyamson, *The Sephardim of England* (London, 1951); and Aubrey Newman, *The United Synagogue, 1870-1970* (London, 1976). Full lists of individual institutions are provided in the *Jewish Year Book*, which began to appear in 1896.

political and educational aid to distressed Jewish communities overseas. This ad hoc collection of Anglo-Jewry's most prominent philanthropists evinced no inclination to relinquish its paternalistic hold on the community's foreign policy to the benefit of any other organization. On the contrary, representatives of both the Board of Deputies and the AJA regularly took council in the Conjoint Foreign Committee, which occupied a position roughly corresponding to that of a communal privy council—with the Rothschilds, who rarely attended any of these bodies, playing the role of a royal family. Whatever individual Chovevei Zionists may have thought of this institutional structure, they made no attempts to pose as the united critics of the existing arrangement, still less as the corporate vehicle of communal change. The majority did not challenge the prerogatives of the older organizations (even when they affected activities in *Erez Yisrael*[23]); we have no evidence of a concerted effort to form a distinct party within them.

This was no longer the case in 1920. By then, the English Zionist Federation was a cornucopia of political, cultural, and financial activity; it thus constituted, in its own right, one of Anglo-Jewry's most important communal organizations. Its leadership avowedly pursued communal power and its program insistently advocated changes in the form and structure of communal government. As will be seen, the Zionists were not the only group within Anglo-Jewry to strive for such ends; neither were they necessarily the most influential to do so. In many ways, it will be argued, Herzl's successors were not very much closer to a "conquest" of this community in 1920 than his supporters had been a quarter of a century earlier. Nevertheless, 1920 does represent a turning point, principally because it was in that year that the representatives of the major powers assembled at San Remo formally recognized Great Britain's position as the mandatory

[23] Report of a speech by Goldsmid to members of the Chovevei Zion in *The Jewish Chronicle* [hereafter *JC*], 6 October 1893, p. 13. *The Jewish Chronicle*, for all its limitations and biases, is an indispensable source for communal history throughout this period. See [Cecil Roth] *The Jewish Chronicle, 1841-1941* (London, 1941), p. 115.

authority in Palestine. Justifiably proclaimed a "great victory" for political Zionism,[24] that treaty culminated one phase of diligent diplomatic endeavor and ushered in another. Simultaneously, and consequently, it altered the dimensions of various Anglo-Jewish attitudes toward the movement. After San Remo, Zionist ambitions and Zionism's progress were no longer subjects of predominantly insular concern. They manifestly became (as, indeed, Herzl had originally intended them to become) issues of high policy—and ultimately of compelling international attention. The change was one of content as well as of context. As such, it necessitated a shift in the axes of communal concern and brought about a realignment of the forces that had hitherto helped to shape Zionist fortunes within Anglo-Jewry.

[24] Christopher Sykes, *Cross Roads to Israel* (London, 1965), p. 47.