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יְהֵא זְכָרָם בְּרוּךְ

*'Get wisdom, get understanding:
Forsake her not and she shall preserve thee'*

PROV. 4: 5

The Kibbutz Movement
A History

VOLUME II

CRISIS AND ACHIEVEMENT
1939–1995

HENRY NEAR

London • Portland, Oregon

The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization

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Preface

This volume traces the story of the kibbutz movement through the dark days of the Second World War and the Holocaust, through the final years of the British Mandate, to the triumphs of the War of Independence and the establishment of the State of Israel, and the consequent series of crises and recoveries. I have set the chronological limit of the narrative at 1977, the date of the electoral upheaval which ended the labour movement's domination of the Israeli political scene and radically altered the situation of the kibbutz movement. This is a little later than the thirty-year limit which is conventionally thought of as history proper. One of the reasons usually given for this limitation does not apply here, for I have had free access to all the relevant archives, with very few exceptions. But it was with much hesitation that I considered whether to continue after 1977: the problem of historical perspective is particularly acute in a period of rapid change such as the kibbutz movement is still undergoing, and in the case of one so deeply involved as I am in the subject of my research. But I felt that readers would be disappointed if I were to ignore the major developments of the past twenty years and the present crisis, which is widely felt to threaten the very existence of the kibbutz. So I have added a final chapter, less detailed than its predecessors, which brings the story more or less up to date. If this is thought to be journalism rather than history, I plead guilty. Perhaps the book's shortcomings are extenuated to some extent by its title: it claims to be no more than a history—one among many which will, I hope, correct my errors and bring new insights to bear.

The structure of this volume is rather different from that of its predecessor, which followed a fairly strict chronological pattern. The first nine chapters, like the first volume, deal mainly with public and political events. They are followed by a long chapter devoted to the social developments which, in my view, form the most important aspect of the subject from the late 1950s onwards. In the first volume I discussed various aspects of the social history of the kibbutz. But, as I remarked in the preface, there was little research in this area, and I was forced to draw a somewhat impressionistic picture. In this volume I have profited greatly from the fact that from the early 1960s onwards there has been a good deal of sociological, anthropological, and economic research which

serves, in historical perspective, to give a much fuller picture of the period. Several important works of historical research have also appeared, most of them at the level of the kibbutz movements and their public activities. They have helped to fill important gaps and, in some cases, to correct statements which appeared in the first volume.

When I was considering publishing this book with the Littman Library of Jewish Civilization I was asked by its founder, the late Louis Littman, whether I thought that one as committed as myself to the kibbutz and its values could write objective history. I answered that there was no inherent problem greater than that of a patriotic Englishman writing about the development of his country and its social system. I think that my work has proved my point, and gone beyond it: for the insights afforded by forty years of life, work, and public activity in the kibbutz have added dimensions not usually available to an outsider. What I have learnt in the course of my research has added vastly to my understanding of my own society. I hope that it will serve others in the same way.

Many of the acknowledgements in the first volume are applicable here, too. I have been courteously and efficiently served by the staff of many libraries and archives: particularly at Beit Berl, Giv'at Haviva, Hulda, the Lavon Institute, and the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies; and most of all at Ef'al. The peaceful sanctuary which enabled me to complete the first volume was again provided by the Oxford Centre at Yarnton Manor and by Yad Tabenkin at Ef'al. I owe much to the scholars and friends with whom I have discussed virtually every aspect of the book: Avi Aharonson, Joseph Gorni, Baruch Kanari, Ya'akov Oved, Yehuda Riemer, Israel Scheffer, Ilan Troen, Eli Tsur, Muki Tsur, David Zait, and many more. Marion Lupu again corrected my English with skill and enthusiasm, and Connie Webber and Janet Moth of the Littman Library displayed undeserved sympathy and patience, as well as a high degree of professionalism. Many thanks to all of them. And, even more, to my wife, Alisa.

Kibbutz Beit Ha'emek
November 1996

H.N.

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Note on Translation, Transliteration, and References

All translations in this volume are by the author.

In transliterating Hebrew words, a modified version of the *Encyclopedia Judaica* system has been used, except in cases where an accepted English form exists (for example, Hechalutz rather than Heḥalutz). The divergencies from the *Encyclopedia Judaica* are that no diacritics are used (for example, *ḥet* is transliterated as *h*); *tzadi* is transliterated as *tz*; and no distinction is made between *aleph* and *ayin*. The definite article is transliterated as *ha* instead of *ha-*. The feminine singular form is indicated by *-a*, not *-ah* (*avoda*, not *avodah*).

Aids to the pronunciation of Hebrew words will be found in the Glossary, which explains Hebrew words and phrases not defined in the text, and provides background information on the various organizations which figure prominently in the narrative. Books, articles, and other material cited in the footnotes are referred to by the author's name and a shortened form of the title. Full bibliographical details will be found in the References. References to the first volume of this book are given in the form *KM* i. 99-100. Transliterations and translations in notes and references are in accordance with the authors' preferences, and not necessarily with the above rules.

Rates of Exchange and Inflation

1935-1990

	Rates of exchange		Sterling purchasing power (base 1993)
	\$1.0	£1.0	
1935	4.9	1.0	20.7
1939	4.6	1.0	20.8
1945	4.0	1.0	15.5
1948	3.7	1.0	14.8
1955	1.8	5.0	10.6
1960	1.8	5.0	9.2
1970	3.5	8.4	6.5
1975	7.0	15.4	4.0
1980	7.4	17.0	2.0
1990	2.0	3.2	1.2

Note: The currency used until the establishment of the State of Israel was the Palestine pound (£P), equivalent to the pound sterling. After 1948 the first currency in use in the State of Israel was the *lira* (pl. *lirot*) (£l), also at first equivalent to the pound sterling, but reduced by successive inflations. From 1977 the unit of currency became the *shekel* (pl. *sh'kalim*) (IS), equivalent to 10 *lirot*. In 1986 this was changed to the new *shekel* (NIS), equivalent to 1,000 old *sh'kalim*. Approximate contemporary equivalents are given in the text where necessary. In 1995 the new *shekel* was equivalent to approximately \$3, or £5.

Sources: Yarhon Heshev (Jan. 1996), 105-7; Newman and Foster, *The Value of a Pound*.

Introduction

IN SEPTEMBER 1939 the kibbutz movement reached its thirtieth year. In less ominous times this would have been an occasion for justified celebration: originating with a handful of young men and women living in dilapidated mud huts close to the bank of the Jordan, it had grown to more than seventy established communities and forty groups preparing for settlement, with a population of some 24,000—more than 5 per cent of that of the Yishuv—spread over a wide area from Kfar Gil'adi in the north of the country to Negba in the south. While living on land owned by a quasi-governmental body, the Jewish National Fund, each of these communities held its goods in common, controlling its own social, cultural, and economic affairs by a complex system of direct democracy. Very few of their children had yet reached adulthood, but they had an earnest of survival and future expansion not only in the 4,000 children in their unique educational system, but in the tens of thousands of young people in more than twenty youth movements in the Diaspora and in the Yishuv affiliated to the five nationwide kibbutz movements.

Their growth, and their considerable and growing prestige in the Yishuv and the Zionist movement, sprang in large part from the fact that they were not only socialist communities but an élite committed to serving the Zionist movement and the Jewish people in what was generally agreed to be one of the central tasks of the Yishuv: strengthening, expanding, and defending Jewish agricultural settlement.

From the early 1920s until 1936 the kibbutz movement had developed slowly in comparison with the growing number of new moshavim (smallholders' settlements) and *moshavot* (privately owned villages). In 1936, in reaction to a widespread and violent Arab nationalist campaign known as the Arab revolt, the British Mandatory power actively considered imposing a settlement of the Palestine problem based on partition of the country into Jewish and Arab states. Though the Yishuv and the Zionist movement were divided on this issue, there was a broad consensus on the need for a swift expansion of Jewish settlement in order to ensure that any such state would be as large and as easily defended as possible. From 1936 to 1939, years known in Zionist historiography as the tower and stockade period, the number of kibbutzim increased at an unprecedented rate, as did the prestige of the kibbutz movement and the moral,

political, and financial support it received from the Zionist movement and the Yishuv as a whole.

The growth of the kibbutz movement was very largely dependent on the policies of the Mandatory government. Its main source of manpower was the youth movements of the Diaspora, and the number of their graduates allowed into Palestine was strictly controlled by the six-monthly allocation of 'workers' immigration certificates'. From 1939 onwards the British government's White Paper policy combined with enemy control of the Mediterranean to slow down Jewish immigration of all sorts, and threatened to bring the whole Zionist enterprise to an end.

The terms of the Mandate included both the commitment to foster the growth of the Jewish national home and the obligation to protect the rights of the Arab inhabitants of Palestine; but these liabilities were given different interpretations and emphases. Since the early 1920s British government policy had been marked by a steady retreat from its early pro-Zionist stance. The White Paper of May 1939 envisaged the end of the Mandate in 1949, creating an independent Arab-controlled state with a Jewish minority, and to that end stringent restrictions were imposed on Jewish immigration and land purchase. This was an exceedingly heavy blow to the Yishuv and to the Jews of Europe, for whom Palestine was one of the few potential places of refuge from the threat of Nazi persecution. As for the kibbutzim, not only was their chief source of manpower blocked, but new settlement, their prime means of further development, was subject to severe limitation. But the Yishuv's practical means of protest were few, for from now on the demands of the war, in which the fate of Palestine and the whole of the Jewish people hung in the balance, became increasingly urgent: there was general agreement in the Yishuv and kibbutz movement on the need to support the Allied war effort vigorously, while doing all in their power to frustrate the White Paper policy and the land regulations.

At the outbreak of war there were five kibbutz movements, each with one or more affiliated youth movements in the Diaspora and the Yishuv. Historically, the differences between them sprang from their concepts of the nature and structure of kibbutz society.¹ But, though these variations of the kibbutz idea were still part of their ideology and practice, over the previous ten years they had been overlaid by more immediate political disagreements. All of the kibbutz movements recruited new members through a wide range of youth movements, and

¹ For a fuller account of these differences, see *KM* i, and esp. tables 2 and 11.

through Youth Aliya, a scheme established in 1934 whereby young refugees from the Nazis were brought to Palestine and educated mainly in the kibbutzim.

The biggest movement, the Kibbutz Me'uhad, under the leadership of Yitzhak Tabenkin, supported—and was supported by—Mapai, the leading party in the Yishuv, led by David Ben-Gurion and Berl Katznelson. But this support was far from whole-hearted. During 1938–9, after a series of political controversies in the course of which the leadership of the Kibbutz Me'uhad had emerged as a powerful oppositionist force within the party, it had strengthened and institutionalized this position by creating Faction B, an alliance with groups of party members in the towns. Although this faction had the support of the majority in the Kibbutz Me'uhad and its most prominent leaders, a significant number of the movement's members—perhaps as many as a third—demurred from its policies, and supported the Mapai leadership.

The second largest kibbutz movement was the Kibbutz Artzi of Hashomer Hatzair.² Under the leadership of Meir Ya'ari and Ya'akov Hazan it acted as an independent political force in every respect, though its membership consisted only of the members of its kibbutzim and its youth movement. Since the mid-1930s; however, it had been supported by a small but growing urban party, the Socialist League.

The third kibbutz movement, Hever Hakvutzot, was less centralized, and played a less active role in national politics. Most of its members supported the central Mapai leadership, and some of its leaders—notably Pinhas Lubianiker (Lavon) and Yosef Baratz—were active in the party.

During the mid-1930s two new kibbutz movements had been established. The Kibbutz Dati was similar in many respects to the bigger movements, but its members were Orthodox Jews. It was affiliated to the Mizrahi (Orthodox Zionist) party. The Ha'oved Hatzioni movement was a tiny group of kibbutzim affiliated to the non-socialist General Zionist party. From an early stage it co-operated closely with Hever Hakvutzot, while retaining its separate political identity.

Despite the ideological and practical differences between individual kibbutzim and between the kibbutz movements, by the beginning of the Second World War there was to be found in every kibbutz community a similar way of life, democratic, co-operative, and egalitarian. Productive work, much of it physically very hard, was at its centre: at this stage agriculture predominated, though there were also a few rudimentary

² So called because of its origins in, and continued connection with, the eastern European youth movement of that name.

industrial enterprises. The years of attack and the threat of attack had confirmed the image of the kibbutznik as a pioneer who 'wrought in the work with one of his hands, and with the other held a weapon'.³ All of these characteristics were expressed and strengthened in the kibbutzim's cultural life—particularly their special ways of celebrating the yearly cycle of Jewish festivals—and in their educational system.

The activities and achievements of the kibbutz movement during the Second World War accorded fully with this image. A high proportion of kibbutz members joined the armed forces, and those remaining worked to the limits of their strength in order to provide food supplies for the Yishuv and logistic support for the Allied armies. They were active in the Hagana, and this period saw the beginning of the Palmach, the mobilized force of the Hagana, with its special connection with the kibbutz movement. New settlement continued throughout the war, and, as in the previous three years, the kibbutzim were in its forefront. Finally, from 1943 onwards work with the youth movements in the Diaspora, and absorption of new immigrants, were resumed.

The kibbutz movement, like the rest of the Yishuv, stood aghast and powerless in the face of the Holocaust; but most of the parachutists who were sent to Europe in 1944–5, though too few and too late, were kibbutz members. In Nazi-occupied Europe the graduates and leaders of the kibbutz-affiliated youth movements played a leading part in the resistance; their role in the Warsaw ghetto revolt was the outstanding example of their many heroic acts.

All of these activities can be summed up in the term frequently used to characterize the kibbutz and the type of person it aspired to develop: *halutziut*—pioneering, or serving the Zionist cause. On this there was an underlying unity between all the kibbutz movements and the leadership of the Zionist movement. As in previous periods, however, this unity stood in sharp contrast to the political differences between them. From 1934 the leaders of the Kibbutz Me'uhad had aspired to leadership of the labour movement, and came close to achieving it, particularly in the debate on the partition of Palestine in 1937–9. From 1941, when Ben-Gurion's espousal of the idea of a 'Jewish commonwealth' as part of the post-war settlement revived this controversy, until the very eve of the establishment of the State of Israel, both the major movements (the Kibbutz Artzi and the Kibbutz Me'uhad) were ranged against the policies of Mapai, under Ben-Gurion's leadership.

³ This biblical phrase (Neh. 4: 17) was often quoted during the tower and stockade period.

The combination of common Zionist aims and actions with deep political disagreement continued in the post-war period: both the Kibbutz Me'uhad and the Kibbutz Artzi constantly dissented from the Mapai leadership both on strategic aims and on the tactics to be used in opposing British policy; but they played a major part in the massive effort to reconstitute the European pioneering youth movements, to bring to Palestine and absorb in kibbutzim the greatest possible number of immigrants, and constantly to increase Jewish settlement. In all of these areas they achieved considerable success: at the time of the establishment of the State of Israel both the number of kibbutzim and their population had more than doubled since 1939, and the kibbutzim's share in the general population was higher than it had ever been. Perhaps most important of all, the pattern of Jewish settlement—largely of kibbutzim—created since 1936 was a major influence on the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine, which drew the map on which the territory of the future Jewish state was based.

In the political sphere, however, the activities of the kibbutz movements were an almost complete failure. In the Zionist movement, their opposition to the establishment of a Jewish state and its corollary, the partition of Palestine, was not only fruitless but lost them a good deal of public support from many who admired their pioneering spirit and achievements. Similarly, it may be that the pro-Soviet line of the Kibbutz Artzi and the Kibbutz Me'uhad played a minor part in persuading the Russians to support the establishment of the State of Israel in 1947; but it was far from gaining them the degree of popularity which they expected, and deepened the internal schism within the Kibbutz Me'uhad which had been threatening that movement's unity since the mid-1930s.

During the War of Independence, too, successful pioneering effort was accompanied by frustrated political opposition on the part of the major movements, though Hever Hakvutzot and the minority in the Kibbutz Me'uhad continued to give staunch support to the Mapai establishment. The heroic defence of front-line kibbutzim, the exploits of the Palmach, and the intensive settlement of strategic areas, were the culmination of many years of education, training, and experience in kibbutz living. Ben-Gurion's choice of commanders, his strategic decisions, and, most of all, the disbandment of the Palmach—each of which met with reservations and often with strong opposition from the political leaders of the Kibbutz Me'uhad and their supporters in the Israeli Defence Force—showed that the pioneering virtues were not in themselves a

guarantee of effective action or public support against the almost omnipotent Ben-Gurion and his followers.

With the establishment of the State of Israel the kibbutz movement was subjected to two virtually simultaneous crises. The first, more fundamental, sprang from its inability to continue to fulfil the pioneering tasks it had carried out so successfully before the war: the Holocaust had destroyed its reserves of manpower, and it was no longer able to play the leading part in strategic settlement; and it proved unable to attract new immigrants in sufficient numbers to maintain the proportion of kibbutz members in the general population, or make more than a minimal contribution to immigrant absorption. The result was a widespread crisis of faith within the kibbutzim, and a serious fall in their prestige and power. The second crisis, which led to the split in the Kibbutz Me'uhad in 1951 and came close to splitting the Kibbutz Artzi, was similar to pre-state kibbutz politics in that it had little or no influence on the conduct of national affairs; but the fact that it took place at the height of the Cold War, when the outbreak of worldwide hostilities was a real possibility, added a virulence which had not been seen in the kibbutz movement for more than twenty years.

The combined force of these two crises could well have destroyed the kibbutz movement, or reduced it to negligible proportions. It is a sign of its fundamental social and economic soundness, and of the governmental support which it continued to enjoy, that despite these setbacks it had achieved a modest but appreciable recovery by the end of the 1950s. In supplying much of the country's food during the 'austerity' period of the early years of the state, and adapting to cash and export crops when these were more appropriate to the country's growing economy, the kibbutzim again displayed the skill, energy, and devotion which had informed their performance of pioneering tasks throughout their history. Though their proportion in the population of Israel continued to decline, they received a small but steady stream of reinforcements from the youth movements in Israel and the Diaspora, and it eventually levelled out at about 3 per cent. Politics took second place: although the leadership continued its activities, with the decline in faith in the Soviet Union from the mid-1950s the kibbutz-led parties became variants, and for the most part allies, of the leadership of the labour movement and—until 1977—of the state. In this, as in other spheres, the function of the kibbutz movement was service rather than leadership.

The crises of the 1950s led to a general lowering of sights: the kibbutz was no longer seen as the leading element in the state, but as one sector

among others, capable of making a special contribution in certain spheres—mainly the economy, defence, and culture—maintaining its distinctive way of life. Thus during the 1960s and early 1970s attention was increasingly focused on the internal development of the kibbutz movement rather than its social and political influence; although, paradoxically, at this time there was growing interest in the world outside Israel in the kibbutz as a unique social phenomenon, and the implications to be drawn from its development and survival.

From the mid-1960s onwards the character of the kibbutz community has altered in several fundamental ways. The industrial development which began during the Second World War gathered pace, as increased production began to be seen as one of main contributions of the kibbutz to the independence and prosperity of the state. By the end of the 1970s the great majority of kibbutzim had at least one industrial enterprise, and virtually all were partners in the regional co-operatively owned conglomerates.

At the same time, kibbutz-born men and women began to enter their communities as adult members, to a point where their number equalled and even surpassed those recruited through the youth movements. Extended families were to be found living in many kibbutzim, to the third and fourth generation. Although this development brought with it a number of serious new problems, it was undoubtedly a significant contribution to the stability of the kibbutz community. Now, too, for the first time there arose the question of ageing, as an increasing number of the founding members reached the age of retirement. During the 1980s it also became apparent that the majority of kibbutz-born youngsters would acquire some form of higher education after their army service, and that this in its turn would further influence the occupational structure of the kibbutz.

Within some twenty years, therefore, these economic, demographic, and educational developments had wrought greater changes in kibbutz society than had taken place in the previous half-century. None the less, it retained most of its basic characteristics: though its structure had been altered in a good many minor ways in order to adapt to circumstances, it was still recognizably the same as that of the 'big *kvutza*' as envisaged by Shlomo Lavi in the early 1920s, and put into practice in the subsequent half-century. But to the high degree of equality and social solidarity which had always characterized it was now added a rising standard of living. It began to attract not only those born within kibbutz society or educated in the youth movements: a growing number of families, from Israel

and abroad, who rejected the competitive life of urban society, found a new quality of life in the kibbutz.

These were, however, not unmixed blessings. With the rise in living standards the pioneering values which were the most constant guarantee of the kibbutzim's success, became weaker, and in many cases disappeared completely. The younger generation spoke in a different voice from that of its parents, and made demands which were often not easily met or even understood by the founding fathers. The kibbutz was able to maintain itself, and retain many of its socialist values, within an Israeli society increasingly divorced from the egalitarian and co-operative ethos of the pre-state Yishuv; but its very economic success had made it part of the privileged sector of that society. Ideologically and politically all of the kibbutz movements were part and parcel of the labour movement, which had been dominant in the Yishuv and the state for some fifty years; but this dominance was seriously eroded as a result of the failures of the Yom Kippur War, the discontent of the underprivileged classes (ethnically mostly of oriental origin)⁴ and dissatisfaction with the Labour Party's willingness to give up territory won in the Six-Day War. All these elements combined in 1977 to bring about the electoral defeat of the labour movement, which changed the face of Israeli society and the position of the kibbutz within it.

From 1977 onwards the position of the kibbutz in Israeli society rapidly worsened. It no longer had the support and prestige it had enjoyed when performing functions generally agreed to be vital for the whole nation; its socialist ideals were out of chime with the dominant political culture; and it lacked the economic backing which it had hitherto received from sympathetic Labour governments. These facts combined with fortuitous economic and political circumstances to bring the crisis of the mid-1980s, in which a series of financial failures led to a loss of faith and revaluation of many traditional aspects of kibbutz society among veterans and young people alike. The final effects of these processes are as yet impossible to assess.

This is not a simple story of idealistic heroism or of achievement and decline. It is full of contrasts, contradictions, and tensions which more

⁴ In the following pages the two main ethnic sectors of Israeli society are described as Sephardim (Jews of Asian and African origin) and Ashkenazim (originating in Europe, the Americas, South Africa, or Australasia). These terms are, not strictly accurate, and many contemporary writers refrain from using them. I used them in the first volume, however, and have retained them here, in view of the stylistic difficulties and irrelevant associations of the alternative terms in English.

than once erupted into crisis: the contrast between basic unity of purpose and recurrent political and ideological controversy; the contradiction between the ethos of military defence and the humanism, tolerance, and democracy which are basic to kibbutz life; and the tension between the unconstrained, often almost anarchic, democracy of the individual kibbutz and the centralism of the kibbutz movements. Perhaps most fundamental of all is the contrast between the success of the day-to-day struggle to build and maintain a democratic socialist community and the degree to which the belief that this process would bring about revolutionary change in society at large proved to be illusory.

Some of these tensions are inherent in the very concept of the kibbutz, others the result of concrete historical developments. Combined with the weaknesses and errors of those who built and led the kibbutz movement, they resulted in a great many contradictions and failures. But against these must be weighed the exploration of new ways of life, the contribution of the kibbutz to the State of Israel and its citizens, and the depths of devotion, idealism, and creativity which were revealed in the process.

I

The Kibbutz Movement in the War

THE SECOND WORLD WAR led to immense changes in the Jewish people, the Yishuv, and the kibbutz movement. Although the military progress of the war, its political implications, the Holocaust, and developments within the Zionist movement and the Yishuv were inseparably linked in the actual sequence of events, it will be convenient to deal with each of these aspects of the war separately, in this and the following two chapters.

The outbreak of war in September 1939 had immediate effects on the whole of the Mediterranean area and the Balkan countries. However, the attempt of the Axis powers to control the region began in earnest only with Germany's assumption of control of Rumania in September 1940, followed shortly afterwards by Italy's invasion of Greece and the accession of the other Balkan countries to the Axis pact. By May 1941 the whole of the north Mediterranean coast was in the hands of the Axis powers or their ally, Spain, though the British retained naval superiority in the Mediterranean itself. At that time, too, the countries of the Maghreb were under the control of Vichy France and Spain, and the German army was spread along the North African coast up to the Egyptian border. To the north of Palestine, Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Lebanon were governed by pro-Axis regimes. Rommel's army had been halted at Tobruk, but there was no certainty that he would not be able to continue his advance through Egypt and beyond, sweep through Palestine, and join up with his allies further north. From the vantage-point of any of the democratic countries the world situation seemed threatening in the extreme. From Palestine, it looked well-nigh desperate.

The first break in the chain surrounding Palestine came in May 1941 with the defeat of a pro-Axis *putsch* in Iraq, and the establishment of a pro-Allied regime backed by the British army. This was soon followed by the invasion of Syria and Lebanon by British forces, and the replacement of the Vichy French government with a Free French administration largely under British control. In the autumn of 1941 the British and Russians invaded Persia and established control of the country.

In the broader perspective of the war these were but minor successes.

During 1941 and for most of 1942 the war went badly for the Allies: the initial German successes in Russia and the Japanese army's triumphal progress coincided with Rommel's brilliant successes on the North African front. By the summer of 1942 the German armies had reached the Caucasus, and there was a distinct danger of their reaching Palestine through Turkey or Persia, while in the south their forces were poised to conquer Egypt. It was only after the British victory at El Alamein in the autumn of 1942, and the battle of Stalingrad shortly afterwards, that it became clear that the tide had turned. Britain's invasion of North Africa at the end of 1942 was a prelude to the invasion of Italy in the following year, to be followed by the Allied liberation of Europe in a series of dearly won but decisive victories, and the defeat of the Japanese in the Far East.

THE WAR EFFORT

For all but a tiny minority in the Yishuv the defeat of Hitler was a major priority, and its military contribution to the Allied war effort was considerable. About 29,500 men and women volunteered for the British forces, and some 700 of them were killed or died on active service or in captivity; in addition, by the summer of 1945 the Palmach, created in 1941 as the Hagana's striking force, numbered about 1,900. Thus, by the end of the war about 5.6 per cent of the Yishuv was mobilized in the official and unofficial forces, a figure which compares not unfavourably with Great Britain (8%) and the US (5.6%), where universal conscription was in force.¹ The Yishuv's war effort can be divided into two categories: recruitment to the British forces, both by direct application to the British military authorities and through the machinery set up by the Jewish Agency; and the harnessing to the war effort of the Hagana, the Jewish voluntary defence force, and its special units.

Recruitment to the British Forces

The official leaders of the Yishuv and the Zionist movement, as well as many thousands of ordinary Jews, were anxious to play a part in the Allied war effort. Despite the lack of compulsory conscription in Palestine, from the beginning of the war many individuals volunteered

¹ Gelber, *Jewish Palestinian Volunteering*, iv. 304; Brenner, 'Kibbutz Members'. Gelber's figures have been amended slightly to exclude the 400 non-Palestinian volunteers in the Jewish Brigade; the population of the Yishuv in 1945 has been adjusted to accord with Bachi's estimate of 563,829 (Bachi, *Population*, 399).

for service. In the early stages they were mainly assigned to units of mixed nationality, and it was only gradually that units composed largely of Palestinian Jews were formed. Such units served in France in 1940, and in Greece and Crete, where some 1,200 were captured at the time of the evacuation of the Allied forces. In August 1940 two Palestinian battalions of the Royal Fusiliers—one Jewish and one Arab—were established. More Jewish units in this framework were added over the coming years. But for most of the war Palestinian Jewish units were employed almost entirely in non-combatant and ancillary tasks—as labourers, porters, drivers, mechanics, technicians, and radio operators—and in guard duties. However, a largely Jewish battalion fought bravely in France in 1940, and a commando unit of Palestinian volunteers distinguished itself in the Eritrean campaign of spring 1941. None the less, though not permitted to train for and participate in front-line fighting, Jewish units played a vital part in maintaining the infrastructure of the Allied armies in the battle for North Africa.²

Throughout the war the Zionist leadership made strenuous efforts to persuade the British authorities to establish Jewish units which would play an active part in the fighting. It was, however, only in the autumn of 1944 that their aspirations came to fruition with the creation of the Jewish Brigade, some 6,500 strong, which took part in the conquest of Italy by the Allied forces.

The Hagana

During the Arab revolt of 1936–9³ the British military authorities had co-operated with the Hagana, armed it, and given many of its members valuable training. As the revolt died down and British government policy became increasingly anti-Zionist, the Hagana was forced back into the underground, and the Mandatory authorities did their best to liquidate it. Men discovered undergoing military training were imprisoned for long terms, Jewish settlements were searched for arms, and the British army demanded that all Jewish-held arms be registered, with a view to confiscation. Tension grew in the spring of 1940 as a result of the Yishuv's widespread and violent protests against the Land Regulations, which put into legal form the restrictions on land purchase by Jews suggested by the White Paper of 1939.

The British attitude, though never officially abandoned, was modified to a degree in the summer of 1940, when the war was going very badly

² Gelber, *Jewish Palestinian Volunteering*, vols. i and ii.

³ On the Arab revolt and the White Paper of 1939 see *KM* i. 299–304.

for the Allies. The arms searches and prosecutions ceased, and there began a period of co-operation between British intelligence agencies in the Middle East and the active forces of the Hagana. The British sabotage and counter-intelligence agency MO4 (later SOE—the Special Operations Executive) supported operations in the Balkans which combined sabotage with attempts to rescue Jews, though with limited success. Spies were recruited for work in Syria and Lebanon, and Jewish knowledge and skill used for interrogation, planning, and propaganda based in Palestine.

All these operations were on a very small scale. So, too, were those in which units of the Hagana and of the Irgun Zva'i Leumi (IZL) took part in actual combat: commando operations in Greece and Crete in 1941; an attempt to sabotage the oil refineries in Tripoli, Syria, from the sea, which failed with the loss of twenty-three lives; and the participation of thirty-three members of the Hagana in the invasion of Syria in June 1941. Among those who took part in this operation were Yig'al Feikovitch (Allon), and Moshe Dayan, who was wounded and lost an eye.

The next stage of British co-operation with the Hagana was in the spring and summer of 1942, when Rommel was at the gates of Alexandria and a German invasion of Palestine was a definite possibility. Although this achieved little in concrete military terms, it was to have important consequences for the future of the Yishuv. Not only were joint contingency plans made for the defence of the country and partisan operations if Palestine were conquered: the British army also gave basic training to several hundred young men and women newly recruited to the Palmach, and several units, albeit poorly armed, were sent to the south of the country when invasion seemed imminent.

Fortunately, the threat of invasion did not materialize. After the victory of El Alamein the British high command in Palestine reverted to its policy of repressing any independent Jewish military force. The Palmach was forced to return to its previous underground status, though now much strengthened both numerically and by virtue of the training it had received from its British mentors. The only actual fighting in which its members engaged at this stage was, again, in a number of small, though dangerous and often effective, operations in Syria.⁴

This summary of the involvement of the Hagana would not be complete without mention of the acts of sabotage and partisan fighting in which its members engaged in the final stages of the war, in particular

⁴ Dinur, *Hagana*, iii. 368–71.

the work of the men and women who were parachuted into the Balkan countries in 1944. This episode is described in more detail in Chapter 2.

THE POLITICS OF MOBILIZATION

Despite the general willingness to fight, voluntary mobilization was not a purely spontaneous phenomenon. The institutions of the Yishuv and the Jewish Agency instituted a series of measures to encourage recruitment, ranging from registration of those of appropriate age to propaganda campaigns, personal canvassing, and moral pressure. These virtually amounted to a system of conscription, enforced by various forms of strong persuasion rather than by statutory powers.⁵ This very process raised a number of issues with strong political implications, both for the Jews and for the British civil and military authorities. The kibbutz movements were deeply involved in the controversies which these issues engendered and, no less, in their practical results.

At all stages the Palestine administration was opposed to arming Jews on the grounds that such a step would arouse Arab opposition and, possibly, trigger off a new revolt. When military circumstances combined with pressure from pro-Zionist elements in the British government to bring about a change of policy, recruitment to the Royal Fusiliers was made conditional on numerical parity between Jews and Arabs. Later, when Jewish manpower was badly needed, this principle was dropped. But for five of the six war years Jewish units were allowed to play only ancillary roles in the Allied forces.

These tactics were attuned to the policy of the British administration as laid down in the White Paper of 1939 which foresaw the end of the British Mandate by 1954 at the latest. By then the Jews were to become a minority in an Arab Palestine linked to Great Britain by ties of friendship and interest. Moreover, it was almost a matter of faith with those in charge of the Palestine administration that openly pro-Jewish measures could easily provoke Arab insurrection both within Palestine and on its borders. To recruit and train Jewish units would grant the Yishuv a status which the Mandatory authorities were concerned to deny, particularly if the Jewish soldiers were allowed to use Zionist symbols such as

⁵ On the basis of a detailed analysis of the process of mobilization, Gelber, in *Jewish Palestinian Volunteering*, concludes that the number of Jews who enrolled in both official and unofficial formations was less a function of the policies and actions of the Zionist movement and the Yishuv leadership than of the public mood and sense of the urgency of the situation. Thus, despite the efforts of the Jewish authorities to make the process obligatory, 'volunteering' is probably a more appropriate description than 'conscription'.

the Hebrew language and the blue and white flag. And, above all, there was a clear danger that these units would become the nucleus of an independent Jewish army after the war.

What the British saw as a danger the Zionists saw as an opportunity. All Jews were motivated by a deep hatred of the Nazis, and a desire to defeat them and wreak vengeance on the persecutors of their people—particularly when the horrors of the Holocaust began to be known towards the end of 1942. And in the darkest days of the war the fear of a German invasion, supported by a local Arab uprising, dominated their thoughts and actions. But they also foresaw the day when they would resume the struggle for a Jewish Palestine. At that point all the elements which the British administration resisted so tenaciously—the prestige and reinforcement of national pride resulting from active participation in the Allied victory, and the military knowledge and experience gained in the war—would stand them in good stead. Moreover, the very fact that the Yishuv conducted its own independent recruiting campaign struck a blow at British authority, and was a step on the road to an independent Zionist administration.

Several factors successively eroded British resistance to the creation of Jewish fighting units. One was the fact that the support of the Yishuv and its reserves of manpower was an important element at certain critical points in the war. In the words of the historian Yehuda Bauer, "The British tried as hard as they could to get along without Jewish help, so as not to incur even moral-political obligations. But when the water reached their chins [as it did in spring 1940, summer 1941, and summer 1942], they turned to the Jews."⁶ In fact, the British stand was not as monolithic as seems from this quotation, and many of the Jewish demands were supported by a number of British soldiers and politicians for a variety of reasons. But there can be no doubt that the Yishuv emerged from the war immensely strengthened politically, and that Jewish participation in the war, and the support of many Arab leaders for the Nazis, were major factors in this process.

Among the Zionist leaders there was a high degree of agreement on the issues which lay between them and the Mandatory government. But the principle of recruitment to the British forces posed a series of fundamental questions on which they were far from unanimous. Could the British be trusted to defend the Yishuv in the case of a German attack, a renewed Arab revolt, or an invasion from a hostile neighbour? What would happen if those recruited into the army were sent to another

⁶ Bauer, *Diplomacy*, 112-13.

theatre of war, or ordered to retreat with their units in the case of an invasion? Should not the Yishuv make arrangements for its own security, with or without the help of the British, as it had attempted to in the pre-war years?

Those who answered this last question in the affirmative rarely denied the importance of open recruitment to the armed forces and the special police.⁷ But they emphasized the need to strengthen the Hagana, and in particular its fighting arm, the Palmach. Since the men and women of the Palmach operated in clandestine conditions and wore civilian clothes, while those in the British forces wore uniform, this debate came to be known as the 'uniform or mufti' controversy, and throughout the war it accompanied the Yishuv's efforts to achieve maximum mobilization of its manpower resources.

The two opposing views are illustrated in the speeches of some of their most extreme proponents at one of the critical points in the war. In the spring of 1942, shortly after the fall of Singapore and on the eve of the final battle for Egypt and the Soviet summer offensive, there was a wide-ranging discussion in the Yishuv of the action to be taken in the event of a German invasion. Many of the leaders of the kibbutz movements played a prominent part in this controversy. Israel Galili of kibbutz Na'an, a member of the high command of the Hagana, said:

On the way to this country, the enemy . . . cannot advance . . . with large armoured and mechanized forces. The first paratrooper has to land somewhere in the country, the first infantry unit must land on our shores. In those circumstances our own strength, if properly mobilized, will be decisive . . . Joining the army is only one of the ways of creating a Jewish defensive force [which will include the Reserve Police and the Hagana] . . . The absolute certainty of danger from the Arabs, and the vital importance of self-defence, not only against the Arabs, but also in the war [cannot be denied].

Yitzhak Tabenkin, the leader of the Kibbutz Me'uhad, agreed:

No particular sector of our front is sacrosanct. Every part is vital. Everything we do is part of the front at some time. Let us not denigrate our work in the kibbutz, in the army, in the police—we must always go to the front, to the weakest sector which requires reinforcement.

⁷ The Palestine police were mainly British-manned, and faithfully carried out government policy, including armed searches and the like. During the Arab revolt Jews were recruited to the settlement police, who served full-time in the Jewish settlements, and the supernumerary police, who also worked in the settlements, but part-time and unpaid. Jews were also recruited to the auxiliary police (e.g. railway police, coastal police) during the Second World War.

At this time, they both maintained, the weakest part of the front was the Palmach, rather than the uniformed forces. Ze'ev Feinsein (later Sheffer) of kibbutz Ayelet Hashahar, himself a soldier in uniform, protested against this attitude:

[In Galili's view] the most effective function, the most efficient and decisive formation in any possible battle is—anything but the army! I know only one thing: everything that we are building here in the Yishuv, including our self-defence formations . . . is now dependent on one thing and one thing only—the front. There is no front-line war except at the front!⁸

There were objective grounds for each of these views. Those who emphasized the need for the Yishuv to develop its own means of defence pointed to the increase in anti-British propaganda among the local Arabs, the possibility of an airborne attack on Palestine, and the uncertainty as regards Allied strategy in the case of a defeat in Egypt; while, on the other hand, the situation in North Africa gave sufficient reason to believe that the more palpable danger lay in the advance of Rommel's army. But this discussion was not only a reaction to the specific situation at the time. In the course of the uniform—mufti controversy each of the political groupings in the Yishuv evolved a clearly defined attitude.

The central institutions of the Yishuv and the Zionist movement attempted to preserve a balance between the two forces: they made strenuous efforts to increase the number of volunteers to the uniformed forces while conducting a constant struggle with the British authorities on their conditions and place of service. At the same time, they insisted on keeping the framework of the Hagana intact, and on recruiting new forces parallel to the army volunteers. This was the view of the majority of Mapai, including men such as Moshe Shertok (Sharett), who led the political negotiations on the issue with the British authorities, and Eliahu Golomb, the commander of the Hagana.

On the whole, the political right and centre (General Zionists) tended to emphasize the importance of recruitment to the official forces rather than to the Hagana. The Revisionists demanded that recruitment to the Allied forces be conditional on the establishment of a large Jewish fighting regiment, and urged their members not to volunteer until this demand was met. This attitude was modified in the days of danger in 1942, when they supported the official mobilization scheme. They had their own formation in mufti (the IZL), had no truck with the Hagana or

⁸ Kibbutz Me'uhad council, 15 Apr. 1942, quoted in Gelber, *Jewish Palestinian Volunteering*, 532-4.

the Palmach, and did not participate in the grand debate outlined above, which took place primarily within the labour movement.

The labour movement was split on this issue. On the left of the political spectrum were two groups which emphasized the dangers in putting too much trust in the British, who had proved to be false friends of Zionism: Faction B of Mapai, and Hashomer Hatzair. By 1939 the incipient split in Mapai had become institutionalized with the establishment of Faction B, in which town groups opposed to the party establishment were allied with the leadership of the Kibbutz Me'uhad.⁹ Faction B, particularly the leaders of the Kibbutz Me'uhad, fervently supported the claims of the 'mufti' section. In the early years of the war, until the German attack on the Soviet Union, their basic mistrust of Britain was reinforced by the belief that the Allies were fighting largely to defend their imperial possessions.¹⁰ Hashomer Hatzair shared this attitude: until the end of 1942 its leaders emphasized the demand that Jewish units in the Allied ranks be used only in Palestine and the adjacent region, and supported recruitment to the Palmach as a constructive alternative to enlistment in the uniformed services. On the other hand, all of Hever Hakvutzot, and a minority within the Kibbutz Me'uhad (mainly those who had supported Berl Katznelson on the issue of kibbutz unity just before the war), supported the policy of the Mapai mainstream, with its emphasis on recruitment to the Allied forces.¹¹

The Kibbutzim Mobilize

The kibbutz movements were deeply involved in virtually all of the operations and controversies described above. Many of the Hagana's training camps and hidden arms caches were situated in or near kibbutzim, because it was easier to preserve secrecy in a friendly and comparatively closed environment. All kibbutz members were automatically enrolled in the Hagana, and a high proportion of the individuals involved in the special operations mentioned above belonged to kibbutzim or to groups preparing for communal settlement.¹²

Through their political attitudes and affiliations the kibbutz move-

⁹ See *KM* i. 353-8.

¹⁰ Cf. Tabenkin's words in 1939: 'There is no fundamental moral difference between Nazism and England and France . . . the mobilization of forces in Palestine [strengthens] distant forces for an anti-Russian front.' Kafkafi, 'Logbooks', 256-7.

¹¹ *KM* i. 346-50.

¹² e.g. Moshe Dayan, at this stage still a member of the Shimron group, which had settled at kibbutz Hanita; Yig'al Allon, of kibbutz Ginossar; and Moshe Carmel of kibbutz Na'an, a high-ranking officer in the Palmach.

ments were also deeply involved in questions of recruitment on the policy-making level. It is, for instance, no accident that the argument quoted above—and very many more such discussions—took place in the central body of the Kibbutz Me'uhad. But these issues also affected the kibbutzim in several other ways. Unlike the Yishuv in general, they had means of enforcing their recruitment policy. The Jewish Agency issued 'mobilization orders', demanding the enrolment of certain age-groups and categories of worker. But there was no effective way of enforcing these orders except through public opinion, moral pressure on resisters—occasionally reinforced by a little violence—exerted by soldiers on leave, or through their expulsion from the Histadrut, which could mean the loss of their jobs. Kibbutz members, by contrast, were subject to the decisions of their communities, which translated the policies of the movements into concrete terms. From the earliest days of the war, the kibbutz movements were required by the recruitment boards of the Yishuv and the Histadrut to provide percentages of their available manpower, and they did so. There were, however, a number of differences between the movements.

The most extreme exponents of the 'uniform' view were to be found in Hever Hakvutzot. In this movement, with its federalist tradition and its emphasis on the individual within the kibbutz community, enlistment was a matter both of movement policy and of individual conscience. As a result, a very high proportion of members of the *kvutzot* volunteered, virtually all of them to the British army, not infrequently in numbers which gravely affected the life and work of the *kvutzot*.

Throughout the [uniform—mufti] controversy we always supported those who demanded . . . participation in the war on every front which might hold up the enemy's advance towards the borders of our country. That is why so many of our comrades are serving in transport units outside our borders . . . Often we [the central committee of the movement] have been called to a particular kibbutz to prevent a 'mass outbreak' of a complete youth group which wanted to volunteer . . . Often we have been called to influence one of the members to put off his mobilization for the sake of the social or economic benefit of his community. This was a real paradox: the very same people [the kibbutz movement] who called for volunteers sometimes had to act in the opposite direction.¹³

Two founding members of veteran *kvutzot*, Joseph Baratz and Ben-Zion Yisraeli, devoted themselves to a recruiting campaign for the British

¹³ 'On the Agenda', *Niv Hakvutza*, July 1942, quoted in Gelber, *Jewish Palestinian Volunteering*, i. 541.

army. Yisraeli in particular, who volunteered for military service in 1941 at the age of 60, was one of the most outspoken proponents of the 'uniform only' doctrine.

In the Kibbutz Artzi, with its centralist tradition and organizational structure, recruitment policy was decided at the movement level. This movement's enthusiasm for service in the British army was mitigated both by the political considerations already mentioned and by its leaders' fear of reducing the number of people in the kibbutzim to a level which would harm the delicate social fabric that had been carefully built up over the years. None the less, they accepted the decisions of the Histadrut and the Zionist authorities and fulfilled their quota. But the reservations described here were not confined to the leadership of the movement. As a result, it not infrequently happened that there were not enough volunteers to fill the quota, and the additional people required were chosen by lot.¹⁴ There were even a few incidents when members who volunteered in opposition to the decision of the kibbutz had their membership revoked.¹⁵

The leaders of the Kibbutz Me'uhad were also deeply suspicious of the intentions of the British, and supported the Zionist demand for Jewish units which would remain in or close to Palestine. But the 'activist' tradition of this movement was very powerful, and many of its members were anxious to play an active part in the defeat of the Nazis. In Giv'at Brenner, for instance, from the early days of the war Haim Ben-Asher, one of the founders and central figures of the kibbutz, demanded in vain to be allowed to volunteer. In 1942 he and another member joined the British army despite the opposition of the kibbutz. One of the members wrote in the kibbutz journal: 'Theoretically we should oppose this act of volunteering in defiance of the will of the community. None the less, our heart goes out to those who have broken out [of the accepted framework], and we cannot deny our feelings.'¹⁶ In this movement it was rarely necessary to decide on recruitment by lot. From the earliest stages of the war, the Kibbutz Me'uhad also emphasized the need for its members to continue to serve in the Hagana and the settlement police in addition to fulfilling the quota for the British forces.

These tendencies and attitudes were reflected in the statistics of

¹⁴ Kanari, *Hakibbutz Hameuchad*, 320-2.

¹⁵ e.g. in Beit Zera. Interview by the author with S. Ben Nahum, 1 June 1992.

¹⁶ 'Diary of Giv'at Brenner', 28 July 1942, quoted in Gelber, *Jewish Palestinian Volunteering*, i. 540.

TABLE 1.1 Mobilization of kibbutz members during the Second World War

	Total population	Members mobilized			Members mobilized as % of total population ^a
		Armed forces	Palmach	Total	
Kibbutz Me'uhad	14,850	1,616	377	1,933	13.0
Kibbutz Artzi	8,173	612	179	891	10.9
Hever Hakvutzot	5,244	919	43	962	18.3
Other	2,170	150 ^b	21	171 ^b	7.8
All kibbutzim	30,437	3,297	620	3,956	13.0
Population of Yishuv	563,829	29,000	1,900	30,900	5.5

Sources: For mobilization of kibbutz members: report of Histadrut Contacts Committee, 1946; Lavon archive, IV 55 (2), 11b. For kibbutz population: Gertz, *Jewish Agricultural Settlement*, 28-9. For mobilization of general population: Gelber, *Jewish Palestinian Volunteering*, iv, 299-304. For statistics of general population: Bachi, *Population*, 399. For Palmach statistics: Brenner, 'Kibbutz Members'.

Notes

^a The disproportion between the percentage mobilized from the kibbutzim and from the general population is rather greater than appears from the table in view of the differences in their demographic structure: 58.3% of the population of the Yishuv were subject to mobilization, as against about 50% of the kibbutz population—of roughly the same age—who were liable to conscription. (This includes members and candidate members—47.6%—and a number of kibbutz-born youths and members of Youth Aliya groups who volunteered.) *Statistical Abstract of Palestine 1944-5*, 19; Gertz, *Jewish Agricultural Settlement*, 28-9.

^b These are estimates, as the figures for the Kibbutz Dati are not available.

recruitment within the kibbutz movement (see Table 1.1). They are impressive by any standard, and particularly so if one takes into account that the great majority of the volunteers worked in occupations, such as agriculture, which in many countries were largely exempted from conscription.

JEWISH SELF-DEFENCE

The vicissitudes of British policy in relation to the Hagana and the Palmach were expressed in their most palpable form in the matter of illegal military exercises and arms caches.¹⁷

During the Arab revolt the British authorities co-operated with the Hagana, assimilated its members into their own forces, and even trained

¹⁷ Dinur, *Hagana*, vol. iii, chs. 9, 12.

its independent units. Every kibbutz had arms: some of them in the hands of the settlement police, others in sealed cases which were only to be opened in case of emergency. But the Hagana also acquired and manufactured arms of which the British had no official knowledge, and to which they turned a blind eye in periods of emergency. At other times they carried out sporadic checks, sometimes prompted by information provided by informers, and punished the offenders with severe prison sentences.

The first instance of this variation in British attitudes was in October 1939, when the Yishuv was in a state of near-rebellion against the policies put forward in the White Paper. Over the previous year there had been many discussions in the high command of the Hagana about the establishment of a central force which would be available in time of need without being bound to any particular locality. As a result, the Hagana organized two special courses for platoon commanders. The second of these, which was supposedly a camp organized by Hapoel, the sports section of the Histadrut, was visited by two British officers, who easily revealed its true nature. An attempt to move the whole camp, including its illegal weapons, failed. Forty-three of the Hagana officers were arrested, and were each sentenced to five years' imprisonment (and in one case, to ten). The British rightly suspected that 'A considerable and widespread Jewish military organization exists in Palestine, and that the ultimate object of securing Jewish supremacy in the country by military action is not absent from the minds of its organizers.'¹⁸ They were determined to extirpate this organization. But the German successes in Europe, followed by Churchill's access to power, and, in particular, the entry of Italy into the war in June 1940, altered the political perspectives and the priorities of the local military force. In February 1941 the forty-three prisoners were released. Many of them were to play an active part in British military operations in Syria four months later.

Even during this period of relatively good relationships, in August 1941 several dozen British policemen conducted an unsuccessful search for hidden arms in the cultural centre of kibbutz Ein Harod. And when the danger of invasion had passed, the Mandatory authorities began to show their continued determination to repress and, as far as possible, to disarm the Hagana. Between May 1942 and November 1943 searches for arms, all of them conducted with no regard for property, and some with great brutality, took place in several kibbutzim: Giv'at Haim, Dafna,

¹⁸ Letter from the colonial minister to the high commissioner for Palestine, Feb. 1940, quoted in Dinur, *Hagana*, iii. 1625.

Giv'at Brenner, Hulda, and Ramat Hakovesh. In the first three of these incidents the members of the kibbutz gathered round the soldiers, protesting and hindering the operation. At Hulda (October 1943), these tactics failed to prevent the soldiers from discovering a mortar-bomb, and as a result seven members of the kibbutz were sent to prison for periods of between two and six years. In Ramat Hakovesh, a month later, a large contingent of police searched both the kibbutz and the neighbouring Palmach camp, and overcame the members' resistance by the use of a considerable degree of force. As a result, fourteen members were hospitalized, and one died of a fractured skull.

It is no coincidence that in these actions, which turned out to be a relatively mild prelude to those which took place after the war, kibbutzim and kibbutz members played a prominent part. A high proportion of those who had participated in the Night Squads and other operations during the Arab revolt, many of them trained and commanded by British officers,¹⁹ were kibbutz members, and it was these seasoned fighters who formed the core of the instructors and trainees on the course whose participants were imprisoned in 1940. The Palmach camps were, with justification, suspected of being bases for military training, including the use of weapons—most of them illegal. And, although at this stage few weapons were actually found in kibbutzim and the penalties imposed were out of all proportion to their quantity, every kibbutz had its concealed stores of weapons and ammunition. Kibbutz Dafna was a way-station for the smuggling of arms from Syria in the wake of the fighting there.²⁰ In addition, the relative isolation of several kibbutzim made them ideal locations for secret arms factories: the case of the chicken-sheds of Kvutzat Schiller, near Rehovot, which were kept in strictly guarded isolation 'because of the danger of infection', is one instance of many.²¹ In short, the kibbutzim saw themselves as 'mobilized' for the struggle for the attainment of Zionist ends in their support for the Hagana in all its branches, as well as in their more formal mobilization to the official armed forces and the Palmach. In this they were no different from tens of thousands in the Yishuv; but because of their geographical location and the control they exercised over their members' activities they were able to make a relatively greater contribution than other sectors of the community, and paid a greater price.

¹⁹ See *KM* i. 314–15.

²⁰ Dinur, *Hagana*, iii. 177.

²¹ Similar operations were conducted at Na'an, Gan Shmuel, the *pluga* at Caesaria, and Ein Shemer. Dinur, *Hagana*, iii. 281–2.

THE PALMACH

A further dimension was added to the dilemmas of mobilization policy with the creation of the Palmach. This was a small unit set up in May 1941 as an élite force of the Hagana for use against anti-Jewish action by the Arabs, and self-defence in the event of a German invasion. Based mainly on men who had gained their fighting experience under Yitzhak Sadeh and Orde Wingate during the Arab revolt, it was, in effect, the beginning of an independent standing army of the Yishuv. In its early stage, however, only the officer corps was mobilized on a full-time basis, and training was conducted at weekends. Its first units, consisting of four companies in agricultural and two in urban areas, numbered about 460 in November 1941.²² During its first year it was severely hampered by lack of funds for the most basic necessities, and at times its very existence seemed in doubt.

The British army saved the Palmach from extinction at this stage. At the beginning of 1942 the military authorities made contact with the Hagana, with a view to training sabotage and scouting units for operation in the event of a German invasion of Palestine. Thus began the formative period of the force. At training courses in the fields of kibbutz Mishmar Ha'emek, partly paid for and equipped by the British army, first the officers and NCOs of the Palmach, and then virtually all its soldiers, were trained in reconnaissance and sabotage techniques. The legitimization of the Palmach was used by the command of the Hagana to increase the number of trainees as far as possible, and to supply them with weapons. In all, some 450 men and women were trained in this way.

Co-operation with the British army ceased at the beginning of 1943, with the retreat of the German army in North Africa. The authorities resumed their policy of treating the Hagana, including the Palmach, as illegal, and in the course of the year several arms searches and trials took place, as in 1940. From now on the Palmach had to work as an underground movement.

Even before 1943, however, it had been faced with a series of difficulties which brought it to a state of severe crisis. In the near-panic atmosphere of the pre-El Alamein period pressure to join the British forces intensified. Many Palmach soldiers left to join the uniformed units, and there was a general decline in morale. The Jewish Agency was reluctant to allocate sufficient money to maintain the force as it was, much less to enlarge it as its proponents demanded. In response to this crisis, the

²² Bauer, *Diplomacy*, 149-152, 166-7.

character of the Palmach was transformed. From an élite reserve unit dependent on the meagre budget of the Jewish Agency and the goodwill of the British army, it became a small standing army, with an independent economic base and a very special tradition and way of life.

The Kibbutz Me'uhad had been vitally concerned with the fortunes of the Palmach since its inception. Of the first groups of recruits to the force (some 850 in number), from whom the majority of its senior officers were drawn, about half were members of kibbutzim, the great majority of them affiliated to Kibbutz Me'uhad.²³ In line with the ideology of 'orientation on ourselves'²⁴ Tabenkin advocated the recruitment of every able-bodied person to the Palmach. But, clearly, there was no point in this policy if lack of funds were to prevent its implementation. In August 1942, therefore, he made a suggestion which was ratified shortly afterwards by the high command of the Hagana. It revolutionized the character of the Palmach, and enabled it to survive.

Although many Hagana bases had been situated on or near kibbutzim, the Hagana forces had always lived and trained separately from the kibbutz communities. From now on the Palmach units divided their time between military training and activity, and work in the kibbutz. According to an agreement between the Hagana and the kibbutz movements signed in November 1942, each soldier worked fourteen-and-a-half days per month in the kibbutz, and devoted eight-and-a-half days to military activity; the remaining time was earmarked for rest, leave, and sickness. In return, the kibbutz was responsible for his or her food, accommodation, clothing, and other minor expenses.

This suggestion solved the problem of the day-to-day expense of maintaining a force on active service. It was also attractive to the kibbutzim, which were badly short of manpower as a result of constant recruitment to the official armed forces and the Hagana.²⁵ But in order to cover the basic investment in maintenance and accommodation a fairly substantial sum was needed, which the Jewish Agency was unable or unwilling to pay. This, too, was supplied by the Kibbutz Me'uhad, in the form of a loan levied from the kibbutzim; it was repaid only after the establishment of the State of Israel.²⁶

²³ There are moderate variations in the numbers given by different authorities, but the proportions are roughly similar. Kanari, *Hakibbutz Hameuchad*, 346-8; Brenner, 'Kibbutz Members', 209-10.

²⁴ i.e. a focus on the social and economic strength of the Yishuv; see *KM* i. 357.

²⁵ Kadish, *To Arms and Farms*, ch. 1.

²⁶ Kanari, *Hakibbutz Hameuchad*, 333.

In its new form the Palmach very quickly acquired an identity of its own, and the scheme found its justification in ways of thought and action quite independent of the original economic considerations. The intimate association of the kibbutz and the camaraderie of military activity, the shared experience of everyday life and the sense of devotion to a cause combined to create a special way of life, whose resonances can still be sensed in the State of Israel today.

The Palmach was different from any other army in a number of ways. The basic unit, the platoon, was trained to act independently, and its officers to use their initiative, in conditions of isolation or lack of communication. Apart from the intensive training in physical fitness and the use of arms common to any crack force, there was an emphasis on subjects such as topography, with the object of making every soldier familiar in great detail with every part of the country. The route march—in civilian terms, the walk or ramble of the youth movements—became an integral part of basic training. The kibbutz tradition affected such matters as relationships between the soldiers, and between officers and men:²⁷ the platoon, the company—indeed, in many respects the Palmach itself—were viewed as social units, based on communal and egalitarian principles in all matters except the strictly military; in these, the chain of command was clearly defined, and the authority of superior officers absolute. Even so, the voluntary nature of the unit and its egalitarian spirit made it customary, as far as possible, to discuss any matter that affected the unit, and attempt to reach agreement before taking action. Payment was equal for all ranks. There were no separate messes for officers, and no insignia of rank. Relationships with the host kibbutz were a fruitful source of common social and cultural experiences and folklore—even a special sense of humour.²⁸

Together with the crystallization of the Palmach and its methods of operation there came into being a staff of officers, mainly of similar origins and outlook, who guided and developed it throughout most of its existence. The commander was Yitzhak Sadeh, an eccentric and charismatic figure, originally a member of the first kibbutz movement, Gedud Ha'avoda (1920–9), who had been engaged in full-time work for the Hagana from the beginning of the Arab revolt. It was he, together with

²⁷ More exactly, men and women, since women were recruited to the Palmach from an early stage. They took part in training and manœuvres side by side with the men, and some fought bravely during the War of Independence. In the main, however, they served in such positions as radio operators and nurses.

²⁸ Ben-Amotz and Hefer, *Tall Stories*; Oring, *Israeli Humor*.

Orde Wingate, who had developed the guerrilla tactics of the Special Night Squads, and he now applied the lessons learnt during that period to the training of this new force. The second in command was Yig'al Allon, born in the Galilean *moshava* Kfar Tavor, but now a member of a group waiting for settlement as a kibbutz. Under them worked a number of talented officers, most of them connected in some way with the kibbutz movement.

Moshe Netzer, of kibbutz Ramat Yohanan, summed up the relationships between this most unusual fighting force and the kibbutzim which served as its hosts in the following words:

We used to go on concentrated manoeuvres and route marches for ten days at a time. The 'contact man' in the kibbutz would give you a note with two or three words on it—you put on your rucksack, with a change of clothing and a bite of food, and off you went. We had been in the kibbutz for a few months, and were only just beginning to get the feel of things at work and in kibbutz society, when the order arrived—and we had to cut ourselves off from it all. Only for ten days; but, truth to tell, those ten days became the centre of one's life. When my friends and I were asked to participate in a course for NCOs, and then for platoon commanders, we were well aware that we were deciding the course of our lives. People in the kibbutz realized this, too, and tried to stop us. But we knew that there was no way back, that in joining the Palmach we had accepted a higher authority over the whole of our lives. . . .

Now, several years later, I realize that our life in the Palmach did not weaken our roots in the kibbutz; on the contrary. . . . True, there were 'casualties on the way'. There were many who joined the Palmach at an early age, before they had had a chance of settling into the kibbutz, and this gave them a status of their own; we even had a special name for them.²⁹ And, indeed, many of them left the kibbutz as a result of their service, and never returned to it.

Our life of work and training in the kibbutzim acclimatized us to the kibbutz, almost unconsciously. I remember myself as a young, inexperienced platoon commander in one of the kibbutzim in the Jezre'el valley. I was new to my task, and my soldiers were townspeople, who had to get used to life in the country, the combination of work and military training, and the special conditions of our life—or, more correctly, the lack of conditions. As usual, there were a great many difficulties which I could not solve. And here the kibbutz members came to my aid: not only the secretary and the work organizer (who often clashed with me 'in the performance of his duties'), but many ordinary members, in the work branches, in the various committees, and in many other places. They did not see us as hired workers, or 'labouring mercenaries', but as comrades, emissaries of the pioneering movement, the nucleus of an underground army. They didn't talk

²⁹ Kabak (*kibbutznik bli kibbutz*): a kibbutznik without a kibbutz.

about it much; but we felt it in their concern, their positive attitude, their desire to smooth our path, to encourage and educate us, and to influence us by their example.³⁰

Under the circumstances of its genesis and growth, it was natural that the Palmach should be recruited mainly from among actual and potential kibbutz members; and, more specifically, from the Kibbutz Me'uhad, which had remained faithful to the concept of the 'army in mufti' despite the opposition of almost all the public bodies in the Yishuv, including many in the kibbutz movement. An analysis of the uniform-mufti controversy and its results in the composition of the Palmach shows that the lines were drawn up almost exactly in accordance with the party divisions crystallized in 1944. Tabenkin, with a small group of disciples, travelled all over the country spreading propaganda on behalf of the Palmach, in the deep conviction that without such a force the Yishuv was in danger of annihilation. He was successful mainly in the circles which had accepted his leadership throughout the previous years—the majority in the Kibbutz Me'uhad. Most of those recruited from among the Mapai minority in his movement chose to don uniform, and recruitment to the Palmach from Hever Hakvutzot was very small. In the Kibbutz Artzi, however, he found a more sympathetic audience, for the Palmach satisfied two criteria which they had demanded in vain of the uniformed forces: it would remain in Palestine, and would preserve the connection between its soldiers and the kibbutz movement. Even so, the Kibbutz Me'uhad remained dominant within the force in every respect until the large-scale mobilization of the early days of the War of Independence. Almost all its senior staff were recruited from the Kibbutz Me'uhad, and from the time when the youth movements became the main source of recruitment, in the autumn of 1944, the Kibbutz Me'uhad's predominance among the rank and file was confirmed and increased. It is not surprising, then, that in some circles the Palmach was known as 'Tabenkin's private army'.³¹

In many ways, the development of the Palmach is reminiscent of that of the Kibbutz Me'uhad itself and of its affiliated youth movement, Hechalutz, both of which claimed to be mass movements but which were in fact highly selective. Similarly, the Palmach was not intended to be a small, élite force, but the nucleus of a 'people's army' which would

³⁰ Gil'ad and Megged, *Book of the Palmach*, i. 484–5.

³¹ Dinur, *Hagana*, iii. 430.

recruit as many soldiers as possible. It therefore attempted to attract all classes and types of people. Its first sources of recruitment were in the kibbutzim and circles close to the labour movement in the towns. However, towards the end of 1944, when it appeared that these were not sufficient, an approach was made to the Noar Oved youth movement. The result was a broadening of the type of soldier to be found in the Palmach: many of those who joined in this way were ill-educated, some even illiterate.

The Noar Oved was a largely working-class movement, a great many of whose members had completed their formal schooling by the age of 14, or even earlier. Most of the pioneering youth movements of the Yishuv were, however, drawn from high-school students. The Jewish Agency's regulations for recruitment to the armed forces made special provision for this class of young people: they could choose between the army, the police, and the Palmach, serving for two years, or one in the case of those accepted by a university. The kibbutz-orientated youth movements, beginning with the Hamahanot Ha'olim, rejected this distinction, and insisted on all their members joining the Palmach for the full two years. In effect, however, many were mobilized for longer than this. For several years the youth movements of the Yishuv had been organizing training-groups of young movement graduates who lived and worked on established kibbutzim, with the intention of forming independent *plugot* for eventual settlement.³² These groups considered themselves to be responsible for their movements of origin, and sent a number of their members to the towns to act as educators and administrators. This arrangement, and, indeed, the very existence of the training groups, was threatened by the Yishuv's mobilization programme of 1943-4, just at the time when recruitment to the Palmach was being undermined by the competing claims of the Jewish Brigade.

In October 1944 an agreement was signed between the youth movements and the Palmach, which helped to save both parties from a potentially disastrous loss of manpower. From then on, after an initial period of agricultural training and social integration, each group joined the Palmach as a 'mobilized training group' (*hachshara meguyeset*). They remained together during their military service, though a certain percentage was seconded for special military duties and work in the youth movement. Thus, the Palmach, no less than the kibbutz, came to be seen

³² In Hebrew, *hachsharot*, in terminology parallel to that of the training kibbutzim of the Diaspora.

as a continuation of the value system and social framework of the youth movement.³³

In the summer of 1944 the Palmach established the first outpost (*he'ahzut*) at what was to become kibbutz Beit Keshet, in Lower Galilee. The background was the renewal of settlement, as part of the continued struggle against the White Paper policy. The original intention was to ensure that a stretch of Jewish-owned land, with considerable strategic importance in the area, should be occupied and defended, and a Palmach group was sent to fulfil these two functions. The members of this group became attached to the spot and decided that, when conditions permitted, they would settle there. Thus there was set a pattern not only for recruitment, training, and military service of groups of youth movement graduates through the Palmach, but also for the continued existence of the groups as permanent settlers. By the end of the war seven such groups had been set up, six intended for settlement as kibbutzim, one as a moshav.³⁴

The educational and institutional connection between the youth movements and the Palmach saved it from dwindling numerically, and gave it renewed impetus at a time when its usefulness was again being called into question. But it also had a fundamental effect on its social character. Those who joined the Palmach from the youth movements were a minority among an élite movement largely recruited from the middle and upper classes of the Yishuv. Although its social base was constantly broadened by the recruitment of young working-class people, the process of education and training was highly selective: co-option rather than change. Those who survived this process became 'Palmach types', part of a force which numbered no more than some 2,500 at the beginning of the War of Independence. The fighting men and women of the Palmach, as well as their ideological mentors, were very conscious of its role as a substitute—poor in numbers, but high in morale and training—for the lost Hechalutz. The parallel was more exact than they may have realized at the time. Here again was a movement which aspired to constant expansion, and claimed to contain all classes in the Yishuv, but was in fact an élite force with a rather narrow social base.

To say this is not to denigrate the very real achievements of the

³³ One example among many is the emphasis on the hike, the love of nature, and the scouting (or, in Palmach terms, camping) way of life. This is strikingly symbolized in a series of articles by Yitzhak Sadeh under the headline 'Round the Campfire', extracts from which were later published in his book of the same name.

³⁴ Bauer, *Diplomacy*, 189, 308; Brenner, *Mobilized Hakhsharot*; cf. Kanari, *Hakibbutz Hameuchad*, ch. 3, pt. 6.

Palmach. It was the basis of the mobilized Israeli army, and there is little doubt that without it the War of Independence would not have been won. But at the end of the war in Europe its battles and victories were yet to come. Indeed, in terms of the war against the Germans, it could certainly be argued at this stage that the 'pro-uniform' faction had been right. Here were more than 2,000 young men and women, the cream of the Yishuv, who had been trained to fight under the most difficult conditions, and were waiting restlessly to go into action. They had seen virtually no actual battle experience as an organized force. The Jewish Brigade, on the other hand, had not only seen action, but was even now at the centre of Zionist activity, helping to lead the remnants of European Jewry on their way to Palestine.³⁵ It must have been with very mixed feelings that these young fighters read the order of the day of their high command on the capitulation of the German forces in Europe:

The world is celebrating the victory over Hitler. Only the Jewish people is still in disarray, in deep mourning, locked out of its only home, the Land of Israel. . . . The White Paper contributed to the destruction of the Jewish people. Had it not existed, tens of thousands of those who went to the furnaces could have been saved. If we cannot burst its bonds, not only will we be unable to rescue the survivors; we ourselves are in danger of destruction in our own homeland. . . .

Those who closed the gates of our country, thereby condemning our people to destruction, will not permit us to achieve our sovereignty. Our independent army will be built not from units of the British army, but from the ranks of our independent defence force. . . .

Before us is not peace, but war. The men of the Hagana will not celebrate the victory over Hitler as demobilized soldiers on their way home, but as fighters, mobilized to fight the people's battles.³⁶

The great days of the Palmach were yet to come. In May 1945 their light was just beginning to dawn.

³⁵ Dinur, *Hagana*, iii. 415-17.

³⁶ Gil'ad and Megged, *Book of the Palmach*, i. 524-5.

The Kibbutz Movement and the Holocaust

THE EUROPEAN YOUTH MOVEMENTS

THE pioneering youth movements of Europe had been an integral part of the kibbutz movement from the late 1920s onwards. At the outbreak of the Second World War these movements were engulfed by the general catastrophe of European Jewry, and the vast majority of their members were killed in the Holocaust. This section will deal with the special part which they played during this period, and the points of contact between the Holocaust and the kibbutz movement in Palestine.

The physical persecution of the Jews, and an intensive campaign to exclude them from the surrounding society, began in Germany with the Nuremberg Laws of 1935. It started to spread beyond the bounds of Germany itself in 1938, with the annexation of Austria, Bohemia, and Moravia to the German Reich. After the conquest of Poland in September 1939 its western provinces were incorporated into the Reich, while the remainder was put under a special administration (the General Gouvernement). The wearing of the yellow patch was enforced, and the Jews of Poland gradually enclosed in ghettos. Anti-Jewish laws were also introduced in the occupied countries of western Europe. The eastern provinces of Poland, as well as Latvia and Estonia, were occupied by the Russians in the wake of the Russo-German pact of August 1939, and were thus exempt from this form of persecution. From October 1939 until June 1940 (when it was occupied by the Russians) Lithuania was an independent state, though in the Russian sphere of influence, and included the town of Vilna with its important Jewish community.

During this time Jews were starved, tortured, and murdered; but it seemed as if the Nazis might be no more than another in the long string of tyrants who had perpetrated pogroms throughout Jewish history. Systematic mass murder began with the German invasion of Russia in June 1941, at first by conventional means such as shooting, then, from the end of the year, with the establishment of the great concentration camps, in an increasingly efficient process of deportation and murder.

The first communities to be annihilated were those in the formerly Russian-occupied territories, but by the spring of 1942 the campaign of destruction was at its height, drawing its victims from all the areas under German control. It continued throughout 1943, until the classic centres of Jewish life in Poland, and those who had been deported to them from the countries of western Europe, had been almost entirely annihilated. Beginning in the spring of 1944 Adolf Eichmann and his associates succeeded in deporting to Auschwitz the great majority of the Jews of Hungary, who until then had been relatively safe. By the autumn of 1944 the death camps had ceased to function, some because they had done their work so well, others because of the approach of the Allied forces.

Poland

At the outbreak of war the pioneering youth movements in Poland had a membership of nearly 70,000 in more than 900 local branches: 26,500 in Hashomer Hatzair; 25,000 in Dror (the consolidated youth movement of the Kibbutz Me'uhad); 10,500 in Akiva; and 7,000 in Gordonia. There were fifty training kibbutzim, with 2,700 trainees.¹

The first result of the German invasion was the break-up of the educational movements, under the pressures of panic, flight, and uncertainty. But two basic elements of the pre-war movements continued to exist: the central cadre of each of the movements was composed of 'activists' who were, in effect, full-time educators and administrators; and most of those in the training farms had long been independent of their families, and were now physically separated from them by the war. The leaders of the major movements in Poland and Lithuania fled eastwards, and found themselves in Soviet-occupied territory. When it became clear that the least suspicion of Zionist activity would be severely repressed, they organized a clandestine route over the border to the independent state of Lithuania, where they concentrated mainly in Vilna.

In theory, many of these young people were entitled to immigration certificates to Palestine, and one of their preoccupations in the coming two years was how to reach a territory where they could be used. At this stage they attempted to reach Romania, and later Slovakia and Hungary. The results were very disappointing: even if they managed to escape from German- or Russian-controlled territory, the combination of hostile governments in the Balkan countries and British control of the

¹ Perlis, *Youth Movements*, 457.

Mediterranean prevented immigration in any considerable numbers: between 1939 and 1943 only 35,000 legal, and 19,000 illegal, immigrants reached Palestine.²

With the cessation of active hostilities in the area the movements began to regroup, and achieved a fragile stability. Many of the pre-war training farms had to be abandoned, but 'kibbutzim'—some of them farms, others communal groups of movement members in towns—were set up in a number of areas. In the Russian-occupied area the movements continued to function clandestinely, but by the spring of 1941 almost all their leaders had been discovered and imprisoned, killed, or exiled. In independent Lithuania there was a short flowering of the youth movements, who worked both among the local Jews and with the many thousands of refugees from Nazi-occupied Poland.

Despite the relatively favourable conditions in Lithuania, many of the leaders of the pioneering youth movements did not stay there. They felt a responsibility for the young people they had left behind them in Nazi-occupied Poland, and most returned to continue the educational mission which they had undertaken before the war. Gradually they built up a network of movement branches, produced educational material and underground newspapers, and even managed to organize a number of country-wide seminars. All of the movements reported that during 1940 and the first months of 1941 their activities were on the increase, and their membership sometimes even greater than in pre-war days. In several districts the skills which they had acquired before the war were of use in establishing and maintaining kibbutzim, which helped them to adapt to the new conditions of life and ensure their physical survival: as before 1939, the kibbutzim became a source of inspiration and leadership to all the movements. Many of these activities were illegal, and were often discovered, leading to severe punishment. Moreover, they took place in a context of starvation, brutality, and murder, as the Germans gradually enclosed all the Jews in ghettos, exercised tight control over their activities through the Judenräte and the Jewish police, and established a regime of forced labour and continuous deportations.

At this stage very few foresaw the Nazis' policy of total destruction. Virtually all the Jews of occupied Europe believed in the eventual victory of the Allied powers, and their declared aim was 'to outlast the Germans'. The educational content of the youth movements' work, and of the written material which survives from the time, was a continuation of their pre-war ideology. The subjects dealt with are a reflection of this: questions of

² Sicron, *Immigration*, 16.

Palestine and the kibbutz, international political questions such as that of the movements' attitude to the Soviet Union, and so forth. The separate movement traditions were still dominant: despite the persecution of its members, Hashomer Hatzair remained sympathetic to the Soviet Union, and even took a line to the left of the leadership of the Kibbutz Artzi, while those under the influence of the Kibbutz Me'uhad still aspired to maximum expansion, in contrast to the élitist tendencies of the other movements.³ But there was an increasing degree of co-operation between the movements, and a gradual change in the emphasis of their day-to-day work. Feeling themselves responsible for all the young people of the ghetto, many of them orphans and refugees, who were forbidden the most elementary education by the Germans, they played a leading part in organizing a wide variety of social services, ranging from soup kitchens to underground schools inside the ghettos. This change was also expressed in their published educational material. Even those movements which before the war had been most extreme in propounding the 'negation of the Diaspora' displayed a new interest in Jewish history, finding role models in the martyrs of previous ages.⁴

The German invasion of Russia put an end to the concept of outlasting the Germans. In the newly conquered Baltic countries, German *Einsatzgruppen* (special murder squads), helped by the local population, initiated a process of indiscriminate killing. None the less, most of the Jews were at first unable to realize the significance of the new policy of mass slaughter: German lies combined with wishful thinking to persuade them that the transports were to work camps, and that only the 'un-productive' were being killed. And, indeed, after the first waves of destruction several of the ghettos—particularly that of Vilna, now reduced from 60,000 Jews to 17,000—enjoyed almost two years of relative tranquillity.⁵

It seems that Abba Kovner, one of the leaders of the Hashomer Hatzair movement in Vilna, was one of the first public figures to realize that the deportations and mass murder of the Jews were part of a general plan of extermination. His conclusion was that the reactions which had previously been appropriate—attempts to send parties across the borders, transfer to quieter ghettos, organization and education within the ghetto—were no longer relevant. At the end of 1941 a meeting organized by the Zionist youth movements issued the following proclamation:

³ Chizik, *The Discussion in Hashomer Hatzair*, 10–15.

⁴ Karmish, *Underground Jewish Press*.

⁵ Reitlinger, *Final Solution*, 287–92.

They Shall Not Lead Us Like Sheep to the Slaughter!

Jewish youth, do not believe those who are deceiving you. Of 80,000 Jews in 'Jerusalem of Lithuania'⁶ only 20,000 survive. They have torn our parents, our brothers, and our sisters away from us before our eyes. . . .

Not one of those who were taken out of the ghetto has returned.

All the roads of the Gestapo lead to Ponary.⁷ And Ponary is death!

You who hesitate—rid yourselves of all illusions!

Your children, your wives and your husbands are no longer alive.

Ponary is not a [labour] camp—all who were there have been shot.

Hitler plans to kill all the Jews of Europe. It is the fate of the Jews of Vilna to be the first in the queue.

Let us not go like sheep to the slaughter!

True, we are weak and defenceless, but the only response to the enemy is resistance!

Brethren! Better to fall as free men in battle than to live at the mercy of the murderers.

Let us defend ourselves to our last breath.

Vilna Ghetto, 1 January 1942.⁸

Shortly afterwards, the representatives of the Zionist youth movements initiated and played a leading part in the resistance movement in the ghetto.

In other parts of the occupied territories the leaders of the youth movements gradually came to similar conclusions, under the stimulus of the news brought to them by the couriers—many of them young girls of non-Jewish appearance—who risked their lives to maintain contact with their comrades in other areas. But until the final stage of the destruction of the ghettos the situation was ambiguous in the extreme, and fraught with tragic predicaments.

One such dilemma was the classic quandary of any resistance movement. From a very early stage, experience had proved that any attack on German soldiers or their helpers could lead to retribution against the ghetto population as a whole; so the resister endangered not only his own life, but those of many innocent people. Another concerned the relationship between the youth movements and the Judenrat. In many cases the heads of the Judenrat proved to be obedient and efficient allies of the Gestapo, by whom they were appointed. In others they managed to exploit the Germans' need for labour, and persuaded or forced the

⁶ Vilna: so called because of the intensity of its Jewish religious and cultural life.

⁷ An abandoned railway halt where tens of thousands of Jews from the Vilna region were shot and buried.

⁸ Arad *et al.*, *The Holocaust Documented*, 344–6; repr. in Perlis, *Youth Movements*, 295.

resistance movements to hold their fire. Elsewhere the Jewish authorities, and even some of the ghetto police, helped those living in the ghettos to evade the German decrees. Thus, the movements' attitude to the Judenrat involved a further series of predicaments, which were resolved—if at all—according to the specific circumstances in each place. In the words of Yehuda Bauer, one of the major historians of the Holocaust:

If we have spoken of Judenräte which submitted to the Nazis, we have not brought examples of the exact opposite kind, while there were Judenräte in the middle which shared some of the qualities of each of these extremes. The obvious conclusion is that there is no room for generalizations.⁹

For the leaders of the pioneering youth movements the first question was not how to resist, but whether to resist at all. The Zionist youth movements had never engaged in local politics or relief work. Their first priority had always been the preparation of their members for immigration to Palestine. Much of their attention, particularly at the beginning of the war, was still directed to this end: attempts were made to cross borders, to obtain (and to forge) documents from foreign embassies, to present lists of potential immigrants, and so forth. It was only when it became clear that there was practically no possibility of escape from the Nazi machinery of destruction that they began to attempt to acquire arms and to organize for battle; and even then there were groups, movements, and individuals who aimed at rescue rather than resistance.

In 1940 and 1941 the desperate state of Jewish youth had turned the attention of the youth movements' leadership outwards, and prompted them to create a network of education and child care for all the children of the ghettos. Similarly, from early 1942 onwards they began to assume the leadership of the activist elements in the ghetto as a whole. Abba Kovner's proclamation was typical in addressing not the members of the movements, but Jewish youth in general.

They were not always alone in this leadership. Other Zionist groups such as Betar (the Revisionist youth organization), as well as non-Zionist movements—the Bund and the Communists—were often involved. This, too, added further dimensions to their problems. In some areas contact with the Communists was essential in order to obtain weapons; but then the question of where the weapons should be used—inside or outside the ghetto, in reaction to the German 'actions' or in support of the Red Army and other partisan groups—often became critical. Here again there was no standard policy: each body decided in accordance

⁹ Bauer, *Jewish Reactions*, 149.

with its own judgement and local conditions. Much the same applied to their relationship with non-Jewish partisan forces. Occasionally such groups gave them aid; much more frequently, they ignored them or hunted them down.

Zionist youth movements were involved in armed struggle in eleven ghettos: Bendin, Białystok, Bochnia, Kraków, Częstochowa, Grodno, Ostrovic, Radom, Tarnów, Vilna, and Warsaw. In many of these cases the resistance scarcely passed the planning stage; in others the timing of the German 'actions' surprised the resisters and frustrated their plans; in yet others they did very little damage. Sometimes they were frustrated by the actions of the Judenrat, sometimes by the fear and hostility of the bulk of the population. In Warsaw the resistance fighters, led by a coalition of Zionist youth groups, not only fought the Germans intermittently for close on three months (from January to March 1943), but also succeeded in commanding the respect and emulation of much of the population. But this was the outstanding exception to the rule of ineffective and isolated bravery, and it happened only at the tail end of the process of destruction.¹⁰

The revolt of the Warsaw ghetto was the peak of Jewish resistance to the Holocaust. Those who took part in it fought with heroism in a literally hopeless situation, and achieved their aim: to take vengeance on their persecutors, and, by their death, to redeem the honour of the Jewish people. A few were also granted what they had believed to be impossible: survival. They lived not only to tell their story in after years, but also to provide inspiration for those in other ghettos to act as they had done.

In the years following the revolt of the Warsaw ghetto, these facts were encapsulated in a simplistic historical myth, accepted by most of the Yishuv, and particularly by its youth movements: the vast majority of the Jewish people had 'gone like sheep to the slaughter', and in this process the Judenräte had been the corrupt and willing tools of the Nazis; only the Zionist youth movements had had the foresight and courage to fight the Germans.¹¹

Later research has shown that there was a large measure of truth in this account. In quantitative terms, Jewish resistance was very weak indeed. The reasons were many: the difficulty of obtaining arms; the Jewish tradition of passive submission to martyrdom; the hostility of the

¹⁰ Bauer, 'The Role of the Youth Movements'.

¹¹ This theme was emphasized by Zivia Lubetkin, leader and heroine of the Warsaw ghetto revolt, at the conference of the Kibbutz Me'uhad in 1946, shortly after she reached Palestine. Kibbutz Me'uhad, *Fifteenth Conference*, 15.

non-Jewish population; and, above all, the ingenuity of the Germans in hiding their true intentions, together with the Jews' reluctance to believe in the 'final solution'. Many of the Nazi-appointed administrators and policemen were indeed corrupt and cruel. The heroism and determination of the Zionist youth movements, and their assumption of leadership in several ghettos, stands out in sharp contrast to the general passivity.¹²

The whole truth, however, was more complex. The Jews were not universally passive, nor were the Judenräte universally evil. Nor were the Zionist youth movements the only organizations which provided leadership: both the Bund and the Communists took part in the resistance committees in several places. In Byelorussia there were many more instances of armed resistance than in central Poland and Galicia; and, since that area had been under Soviet control for many years, there were no Zionist youth movements there. In western Europe, too, other movements played a more central role in the resistance than the Zionists.¹³

But although the Zionist youth movements were not alone in the Jewish resistance they certainly played a vital role, both in the relatively quiet years before June 1942 and during the period of mass murder. There are some special reasons for this. These movements were well organized at the beginning of the war, and managed to preserve their administrative framework and adapt it to changing conditions. They were helped by their contacts with welfare organizations such as the Joint, and were able to exploit as fully as possible the money and commodities which were sent to the ghettos. And between 1939 and 1942, when the Germans were interested in exploiting Jewish labour, their training in physical work and the endurance of hard conditions gave them a definite advantage in the day-to-day battle for survival.

Another major factor, perhaps the most important of all, is the human quality of these young people. At the beginning of the war it was decided that the emissaries from Palestine, who bore British papers, would be too great a burden for the movements to support. With their departure, the local leadership—those who would under normal circumstances have been about to leave for Palestine—took on the burden of administering the movements, and did so with a high degree of skill, dedication, and courage. The movements engaged in a wide variety of activities during the war: the smuggling of people and material aid; the reorganization of the educational branches; the courier service which brought news and help to the ghettos and maintained contact with the outside world; social

¹² *Jewish Resistance*, 202–305.

¹³ *Ibid.* 284–91, 306–34; Bauer, *Jewish Reactions*, chs. 12, 14.

work in the ghettos; the production of underground newspapers; the revival of the training kibbutzim; negotiations with the Judenrat; and, finally, the fighting in the ghettos and the partisan activities which continued after their destruction. In the accounts of virtually all these activities a number of names recur. Many of them, such as Mordecai Anielewicz, Yitzhak Zuckerman, Tzivia Lubetkin, and Abba Kovner have become famous as a result of their part in the ghetto revolts. They, and others less well known but no less heroic in their deeds and effective in their spheres of operation, were not simply unknown figures who achieved leadership as the result of the war. They formed the cadres of their respective movements, and in those movements—particularly in the training kibbutzim—they had a reserve of talented, trained, and devoted people to call on for any task. In the cauldron of war the ‘men of stone’ of the pre-war period became men and women of steel.

Other European Countries

Members and ex-members of the pioneering youth movements in the other countries of Europe suffered in the Holocaust no less than their brethren in Poland. In Yugoslavia, Holland, Italy, France, and Slovakia Jews, and among them many youth movement graduates, fought and fell in the partisan forces.¹⁴ But it was only in a few countries that they acted as an identifiable group.

The most paradoxical development was in Nazi Germany, where for several years the authorities continued to favour the Zionist youth movements, on the grounds that they encouraged their members to emigrate. In 1938 and 1939, at the very time that German Jews were being transported to the Polish border and left to die, the training farms continued their work, emissaries from the Yishuv recruited youngsters for Youth Aliya groups, and the local branches of the movements continued their regular meetings, though under strict supervision by the Gestapo—sometimes even by Hebrew speakers from the Templar colonies of Palestine.¹⁵ This created painful dilemmas: to stay in the relatively protected farm or Youth Aliya group, with some hope of reaching Palestine, or to accompany parents and family on their trip eastwards to the ‘labour camps’. Such doubts were resolved over the coming years, as the outbreak of war put an end to possibilities of education, and conditions on the training farms deteriorated until they became labour camps pure and simple.

¹⁴ *Encyclopedia Judaica*, viii. 900.

¹⁵ Avraham Giv'ol, interviewed by the author, 1 June 1989.

Under these circumstances, the only possibility of collective survival was to go underground. For many of those educated in the Germanic tradition of respect for the law this raised both practical issues—how could one survive in these conditions?—and moral dilemmas—did one have the right to become an outlaw?¹⁶ One group of the Maccabi Hatzair youth movement chose this alternative, and its members maintained contact, held regular meetings, and kept the memory of their movement, of the Land of Israel, and of their dead comrades alive until 1944.¹⁷ Others, particularly those from Hashomer Hatzair, joined the Communist underground. But the movements as such were eliminated with the deportation of German Jewry to the extermination camps from the spring of 1942 onwards. The exception was the ‘favoured’ ghetto of Theresienstadt, in whose social, educational, and cultural activities the pioneering youth movements—particularly those from Czechoslovakia—played a leading part. Here, the aspiration to outlast the Germans, and the wide range of social and educational functions which it prompted, lasted almost until the camp’s liberation at the end of the war.¹⁸

In Romania and Hungary the pioneering movements played a different, but no less important, role. The worst days of the Jews of Romania were in the early part of the war, when they suffered from pogroms, deportation to German-occupied territory, forced labour, and other forms of persecution. From mid-1942 their situation was somewhat eased: the independence of the Romanian government, and the political influence of the Jewish community, enabled more than half of them to escape the German machinery of destruction.¹⁹ During this period the Zionist youth movements were active in organizing escape routes, places of refuge, and false papers for the few thousand refugees who managed to escape from Poland, and helped many of them to reach the then relatively safe territory of Hungary. They also prepared for armed resistance in the event of a German invasion; but this proved to be unnecessary, since the Romanian government never adopted a whole-hearted policy of extermination, and in the later stages of the war actually prevented the Germans from transporting the Jews to the death camps.²⁰

The pioneering youth movements played an important role in resisting Eichmann’s lightning campaign for the destruction of Hungarian Jewry.²¹ Hungary’s Jews, including several thousand refugees from Slovakia and

¹⁶ Schwersenz, *An Underground Pioneering Movement*, 94–5.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 168–9.

¹⁸ Rezniczenko, *Theresienstadt*.

¹⁹ Reitlinger, *Final Solution*, 394–411.

²⁰ *Jewish Resistance*, 145, 291–2; Bauer, *Jewish Reactions*, 160–1.

²¹ Cohen, *The Halutz Resistance in Hungary*.

Poland, were relatively untouched until the Germans occupied the country in March 1944. Until then the general atmosphere had been optimistic, and only the members of the pioneering movements, under the influence of their comrades who had escaped the Holocaust in other lands, were in some measure prepared. They organized the production of false papers, first for their own members and later for any Jew in need. By a similar process, a clandestine route to Romania, originally intended for the movements themselves, was eventually used to save a much wider segment of the community, about 7,000 in number. The movements also engaged in active resistance to the government and the German war effort, commandeered food, and set up institutions for child care. In the words of one scholar:

The Halutz Resistance was the only systematically organized body which operated on a broad scale and in various areas. The result was that many people, both Zionists and non-Zionists, saw in its success a confirmation of the programme and philosophy of Zionism. . . . In Budapest, during the final months [of German occupation], the youth movements were in effect almost the sole source of leadership.²²

Sources of Strength

In the course of the Holocaust the pioneering movements provided leadership and succour far beyond their numerical proportion in the Jewish population. One of the reasons for this has already been mentioned. In a situation where the official leadership of the Jewish communities was venial or weak, they offered one of the few organized alternatives. Their leaders were the chosen heads of élite and dedicated movements. Thus, there was an organizational and personal infrastructure for the work they were called on to perform in time of disaster.

There were also other reasons. The youth movements provided an alternative scheme of values and beliefs to that which had so clearly failed. In a world where family and society were disintegrating before their members' eyes, the movements became an alternative focus of identification. Even before the war they had claimed their members' total devotion. Now, this claim was seen to be justified in the light of the surrounding helplessness. And this contrast formed the basis of the pioneer movements' willingness to aid, and even to lead, the community at large.

In this process the Land of Israel and the kibbutz played a central

²² Cohen, *The Halutz Resistance in Hungary*, 246-7.

role.²³ They offered a vision of an alternative society: at first, in the concrete form of the possibility of emigration; later, as a source of values in educational and social work; and in the final stage, during the process of liquidation and revolt, as an inspiration, an assurance that these young people's sacrifices would not be forgotten—though they saw no personal future for themselves, and even rejected opportunities to escape. For the leaders of the youth movements, this was the aim of the ghetto revolts: to fight and die as Jews, in the place where Jewry was dying; but to be linked, in their deaths as in their lives, to that part of Jewry which would survive and preserve the memory of their heroism. In the words of Yitzhak Zuckerman, who persuaded his comrades to fight on in the Warsaw ghetto despite the initial setback in which they lost almost all their weapons: '90 per cent of the workers and youth fell in the struggle with the dream of a Jewish Land of Israel before their eyes—the Land of Israel of Ein Harod and Mishmar Ha'emek.'²⁴ Zuckerman's reference to the two kibbutzim is of great significance. The image of Palestine in the light of which these young men and women were educated, and which they passed on in their turn to those they educated and led in the ghettos, was primarily that of the kibbutz: many of them scarcely knew of the existence of other sectors of Jewish Palestine, and certainly believed them to be morally inferior to the kibbutzim.²⁵ This viewpoint was expressed in practical as well as ideological terms. The expansion of the youth movements' activities from Zionist education to care for the children of the ghettos, and the assumption of leadership during the ghetto revolts, evolved naturally from the belief that the Zionist youth movements, like the kibbutzim, constituted a serving élite, ready to accept responsibility for the most urgent needs of the Jewish people. The reconstituted training kibbutzim functioned, as far as possible, on the model of the kibbutz. They saved several thousand young Jews from starvation or deportation for some years, and many became centres of resistance in the final stages of the Holocaust. The many temporary 'communes' which sprang up during period of crisis, often continuing their existence in the concentration camps, were also a means of survival and resistance: in this desperate context, even two or three

²³ Bauer, 'The Role of the Youth Movements', 30; Schatzker, 'Jewish Youth Movements in Nazi Germany', 17–18.

²⁴ Quoted in Bauer, *Flight and Rescue*, 25. Ein Harod was the oldest settlement of the Kibbutz Me'uhad, and Mishmar Ha'emek of the Kibbutz Artzi. Each of them served its own youth movement as a symbol of the kibbutz movement and its achievements.

²⁵ Near, *Kibbutz and Society*, 153, 163. Though these passages refer to an earlier period, there had been little change in this respect by 1939.

comrades with a shared background in the youth movements could afford each other many forms of aid, such as protection against theft and physical attack by other prisoners, food and clothing from the common pool, and support in time of illness. Such associations for mutual aid spring up often in times of deep distress; but many of the young people who preferred to trust in them rather than in individual strength had been educated in the youth movements, and saw themselves as applying kibbutz values even in the most extreme circumstances.²⁶

MIDDLE EASTERN YOUTH MOVEMENTS

Although most of the Jews of the Middle East were not directly affected by the Holocaust, there were many incidents of persecution and violence throughout the area. As Allied influence spread, so did the opportunities and aspirations of the Jews to reach Palestine. From 1941, emissaries from the Yishuv organized clandestine routes through Syria for Jews fleeing from Iraq, Turkey, and Persia—some of them from the local communities, others refugees from Europe. After the Allied invasion of Iraq in 1941 emissaries of the Kibbutz Me'uhad set up an underground youth movement, whose members began to reach the Yishuv in small numbers over the next few years. Similar developments took place in other Middle Eastern countries: Tunisia, Morocco, Turkey, and Persia. At this stage these movements were small, and in many countries they were forced to work in secret. But their graduates formed a small but significant addition to the kibbutz movement—mainly to the Kibbutz Me'uhad; and in later years they were to be the nucleus of the Zionist activity which followed the establishment of the State of Israel.²⁷

THE YISHUV

The question of the attitude of the Yishuv to the Holocaust, and whether more could have been done to save the Jews of Europe, is still a matter of controversy. But the main outline of events is clear, and it is against this background that the special case of the kibbutz movements must be examined.²⁸

Throughout the war the Yishuv had sources of information about the state of the Jews in Europe. The representative of Hechalutz in Geneva

²⁶ Ronen, 'The Kibbutz Idea'.

²⁷ Braslavsky, *Labour Movement*, iii. 365–9; Avrahami, 'Beginnings'.

²⁸ Porat, *Stars of David*.

remained there throughout the war, co-operating with other emissaries of the Zionist movement, and from the winter of 1942 there was a Zionist contact office in Istanbul. Postal services were unreliable and subject to censorship, but a system of couriers was developed through which the leaders of the Zionist parties and youth movements corresponded with their friends and colleagues in the Yishuv. Information was also received from the trickle of refugees who arrived in the country during these years. This news, together with relevant parts of the private letters which also arrived from time to time, was circulated to the leaders of the labour movement and the Zionist movement.

In the first years of the war there was no more sense of the magnitude of the impending disaster in the Yishuv than there was in the European Jewish communities themselves. There was talk of 'the destruction of the Jews of Europe', and the word *sho'a* (holocaust) was used; but it was applied to the torture and murder of hundreds, or perhaps thousands, of Jews. By the spring of 1942 accounts of mass murder began to reach the Zionist authorities and were published in the local press, but, on the whole, they were discounted as exaggerations. In August 1942 a series of telegrams from the Zionist authorities' contacts in Europe began to speak of systematic mass slaughter. In November there took place an arrangement whereby a group of Palestinian Jews trapped in Europe by the war were exchanged for German citizens resident in Palestine. The repatriates brought eyewitness accounts of the extermination camps. It was only then that the organized Yishuv held public meetings of 'protest and warning'; but for some time to come there were many signs that information about the process of destruction, which had been available since mid-1942, was being discredited or ignored.

From early 1943 the leaders of the Yishuv and the Zionist movement began to make serious attempts to aid and rescue the Jews of Europe; however, these efforts were almost all frustrated by the decisive factor of Jewish powerlessness. The Yishuv's dependence on the Allied authorities for any sort of practical aid—help in escape from enemy-occupied areas, permission to transfer food and currency, travel permits, even information under conditions of wartime censorship—was almost total. Virtually all their suggestions, from the provision of immigration certificates for threatened Jews to the proposal to bomb the railway tracks leading to Auschwitz, foundered on the rock of the Allies' unwillingness to risk aiding the enemy, bureaucratic indifference and incompetence, and British reluctance to increase the Yishuv's numbers or enhance its political status.

None the less, the record of the Yishuv at the time of the Holocaust

leaves room for many doubts. The committee appointed to deal with matters of rescue was headed by Yitzhak Gruenbaum, a minor figure in the Zionist leadership with very little influence on its inner circle, and even he did not devote all his time to the matter. The sums allocated by the Yishuv to rescue work were small in comparison to those devoted to other matters, such as settlement. It is true that when particular issues arose, such as the project to bomb the railway tracks leading to Auschwitz, or the various spurious offers to release Jews in exchange for money and *matériel*, Moshe Shertok (Sharett), a major Zionist figure, dealt with them. But they were not his main concern for any extended period.

There are a number of reasons for this apparent insensibility. In a very deep sense, the Holocaust was an incredible and unprecedented event. Many simply refused to believe what they were told: frequently, although they gave intellectual assent to the news, they were unwilling to make a considered estimate of its consequences. Further, the news about the Holocaust began to arrive at a time of deep concern about the future of the Yishuv itself: Rommel had reached El Alamein, Egypt was in danger, and there was no certainty that the British would resist an attack on Palestine; there was widespread fear of the destruction of the Yishuv. When the German retreat began, problems of Zionist policy—settlement, immigration, the political struggle, the Jewish Brigade—called for immediate decision and practical action. All these factors combined with the basic fact of British control to relegate rescue attempts to one item among many on the agenda of the organized Yishuv.

THE ROLE OF THE KIBBUTZ MOVEMENTS

In all this, there is no evidence that the kibbutz movements were any different from the rest of the Yishuv at the policy-making level. Neither the literature of the movements nor their public activities show that they were preoccupied with the problems of the Holocaust, or that they gave them precedence over their traditional concerns of defence and settlement. There are, however, a number of aspects of their activities worthy of mention.

Emissaries

At the outbreak of the war there were several dozen emissaries of the kibbutz movements working with the pioneering youth movements in

Europe. At their final meeting, during the 1939 Zionist Congress, they decided that, come what might, they should stay with the youth movements. The speed of the German conquest of Poland surprised them, and found them without contingency plans. With very few exceptions the emissaries found their way across the borders, and managed to reach Palestine within a few months.

The decision to return home, and the controversy which it engendered, exemplify one of the dilemmas inherent in the situation. When Berl Katznelson met them after their return he maintained, with a fervency compounded by his political suspicions of the Kibbutz Me'uhad,²⁹ that they had betrayed their trust by not staying to share the danger with their young charges. Their reply—that the local leaders of the movements had themselves advised them to return home—expressed the logic of the situation: as Palestinian citizens they would be enemy aliens in occupied territory, and would have to live underground, with all the attendant dangers for themselves and those who protected them; they would be a burden on the movements rather than a help. But Katznelson's criticism sprang from a view which went beyond reason in its reaction to the Jewish catastrophe: what was needed was not rationality and survival, but heroism and defiance. And indeed, the leaders of the Jewish youth movements, who themselves showed just these qualities in their struggle against the Nazis, came close to accepting Katznelson's criticisms in later years. It is as if they said 'You had to go home, we told you to go—you were right to go. But why did you not stay with us—or, at a later stage, send others to die with us?'³⁰ The Holocaust raised demands which were beyond the bounds of logic or normal ethical discourse.

The return of the pre-war emissaries to Palestine was not the end of the kibbutz movements' links with the Diaspora. The representative of Hechalutz in Switzerland kept up contact with the pioneering movements throughout the war. The Jewish Agency maintained an office in Istanbul, whose main function in the early years of the war was the constant efforts to distribute whatever immigrant certificates could be obtained, and arrange for transit visas. From October 1941 onwards, the Mossad had at least one representative in Istanbul, engaged in continuous, though rarely successful, attempts to arrange transport to Palestine for the trickle of refugees from the occupied countries.

Early in 1943, in the wake of the Yishuv's realization of the extent of

²⁹ See *KM* i. 346–50, 356–7, and below in this chapter.

³⁰ Shapira, *Berl*, 280, 295–6; Porat, *Stars of David*, 220.

the Holocaust, the number of emissaries in Istanbul was enlarged, and they began to play a much more active role in maintaining contact with the Jews of Europe. A regular courier system was established, and parcels and money sent to those in the ghettos and concentration camps. Forged documents, and entrance visas to neutral countries, were smuggled in. Arrangements for 'rambles'—clandestine border crossings to Slovakia, Romania, Hungary, and Turkey—were made. All of this was organized and directed by a small group of representatives of the Histadrut, almost all of them kibbutz members, often with the help of the pioneering youth movements in the as yet unoccupied states under German influence, particularly in Romania. Their dynamic and imaginative approach and refusal to be bound by over-scrupulous regard for legal forms was in many cases the fruit of their training in the Hagana and the Palmach. It often led to controversy, and to the opposition of the older and more staid Jewish Agency representatives; but there is little doubt that they played a central and effective role, though the quantitative effect of their efforts was tiny compared with the requirements of the time.³¹

In general, the emissaries in Istanbul and Geneva saw their chief aim as rescue, as well as the conveyance of information in both directions. They rarely gave advice to those within the ghettos. When they did, it was almost always to save as many souls as possible, rather than waste lives in a hopeless fight. There are several known cases where the ghetto fighters rejected their advice—and the immigration certificates which they were offered—and fought to the death along with their comrades.

The Parachutists

Attempts to send Palestinian Jews to fight the Germans in Europe had been mooted in the Yishuv since 1940, but to no avail. It was only in November 1942, after hearing a firsthand account of the mass slaughter, that Enzo Sereni suggested dispatching airborne commandos to Europe. One of the departments of British Intelligence was interested in sending a group of parachutists to the Balkan countries, and this plan was finally agreed on. But political and military misgivings on the part of British policy-makers led to many postponements, and the number was reduced from the hundreds originally contemplated to thirty-three. The great majority were dropped in the Balkans in March 1944, when the ghetto revolts had been suppressed and most of European Jewry destroyed, and

³¹ Avneri, *'Velos' to 'Taurus'*, chs. 7, 15; Porat, *Stars of David*, ch. 10.

the Hungarian community was on the point of being deported to Auschwitz.³²

The parachutists were too few and too late to achieve their original aim—to stir up widespread resistance to the Nazis, and disrupt the machinery of the Holocaust. Many of them engaged primarily in more general military duties such as sabotage and liaison with partisan troops. Twelve were caught and imprisoned, and seven of these executed. Others made contact with the local Jewish communities, helped organize self-defence in the final stages of the war, and became a major factor in the early stages of the post-war movement to Palestine.

The parachutists were recruited from the Palmach, and the great majority were kibbutz members, sometimes graduates of the same youth movements they were now coming to aid. However small their concrete contribution to the resistance and rescue of the Jews, they became symbols of the Yishuv's concern for the dying Diaspora, and of the values of the Palmach: courage, strength, and dignity in the face of adversity. Enzo Sereni was parachuted into northern Italy and Hanna Szenes into Hungary, their countries of origin. Both were captured without accomplishing any real military action. But Sereni's conduct in Auschwitz, and Szenes' courage in confronting her Nazi judges, became widely known. They formed the basis of legends which inspired further resistance in Europe, and became part of the heritage of Israel and the kibbutz movements.

ATTITUDES AND IDEOLOGIES

The order of priorities of the leaders of the Yishuv and the kibbutz movements sprang very largely from the immediate practical realities they had to deal with. But it was also the expression of two basic propensities of the members of the labour movement, and particularly of the kibbutz sector: the emphasis on deeds rather than words in the choice of immediate priorities, and the attitudes which sprang from the ideology of 'negation of the Diaspora'. The tendency to focus on practical considerations had the consequence of diverting attention from the Jews of Europe, who were cut off from the Yishuv by war conditions and the policies of the Mandatory government; the rejection of the ghetto and its

³² There is a great deal of literature about the parachutists, in several languages. Porat, *Stars of David*, 220–8, gives a concise account of the political background; Bondy, *The Emissary*, describes both the mission of Enzo Sereni and something of the training process and the difficulties it involved.

values created a lack of empathy with the plight of the Jews of Europe sometimes amounting almost to callousness, particularly among the younger generation in the Yishuv.³³

This tendency can be seen at work in the major pioneering youth movements of the Yishuv. In Hashomer Hatzair, Hamahanot Ha'olim, and the Noar Oved, similar processes occurred, though with variations between the movements. Most of their members envisaged the Diaspora Jews in stereotypic terms: they were thought to be religious to the point of superstition, engaged largely in non-productive occupations, unhealthy, and introverted. This image was contrasted with the healthy, open-minded, socially-conscious Palestinian Jew—the *sabra*, able to work, fight, and make sacrifices for the community.

One result of the news about the Holocaust was to increase the desire of the leaders of these movements to enhance their members' identification with and concern for European Jewry. The effort was only partly successful. After a short period of mourning and identification, the 'lessons of the Holocaust' seemed to have been learnt: Jews must be strong, independent, and ready to fight; the ghetto revolt had shown that this was possible; but the craven behaviour of the Judenräte and those who accepted their writ proved that the majority of Jews were not prepared to resist. The moral of the Holocaust was that Jews must be strong, and that youth movement graduates must join the Palmach in order to defend their country—and the Jewish people—whenever necessary.

In effect, this line of thought was the continuation of the pre-war ideology common to all the youth movements, according to which the Zionist ethos as exemplified in the labour movement of the Yishuv was free from the myriad social, economic, and cultural defects of the Diaspora. Both the older generation of Zionists and the *sabra* generation who set the tone in the youth movements accepted this analysis. But those who had come from the Diaspora were steeped in its culture, with its poignant expression in their personal associations and emotions. They were deeply stricken by the loss of the society which was, after all, the soil in which their own movements had flourished. Ideologically, they rejected the Diaspora. Emotionally, they mourned it.

The situation of the *sabra* generation was precisely the reverse. In principle, they accepted the exhortations of their elders to take full account of the Diaspora and its loss. Hashomer Hatzair added Jewish

³³ Webber, 'Attitudes of Israeli Youth Movements'; Weitz, 'Palestinian Youth Movements'.

and Zionist symbols to its uniform and ceremonies, and all of the movements attempted to enhance the Jewish dimension of their educational programmes. On the whole, the attempt was a failure. Youngsters brought up in an ambience which led them to believe that they themselves embodied the ideal of the new Jew found it impossible to identify with the 'old Jew' whose values their parents had rejected. At the most, they admired the ghetto fighters, whose experience they interpreted in terms of their own: the days of siege and struggle, and the romance of tower and stockade.³⁴ For them, identification with the Jewish people was a matter of ideology. But emotionally they rejected the Diaspora.

This tendency, sometimes expressed with brutal directness, brought about a reaction on the part of a minority within the two biggest youth movements—the Noar Oved and Hamahanot Ha'olim. In 1944 a group of leaders in Hamahanot Ha'olim demanded a revision of educational programmes: now that the Yishuv was the main repository of Judaism, the younger generation should be brought up with a deep knowledge and understanding of Jewish tradition and culture. This demand, and the controversy around it, took place against the background of the struggle for political influence in the movement between Berl Katznelson and Yitzhak Tabenkin, which had been going on for a decade. Since the mid-1930s Katznelson had been emphasizing the need for increased Jewish consciousness and education, and opposing the increasingly Marxist ideology of the youth movements.³⁵ The majority both in the Noar Oved and in Hamahanot Ha'olim, influenced by the ideology of the leading faction in the Kibbutz Me'uhad, tended to interpret both the Jewish situation and that of the Yishuv in universalist Marxist terms. It is, therefore, not surprising that in the controversy over alternative educational programmes the 'pro-Berl faction' chose that which emphasized Jewish themes, while their opponents adopted an educational approach which dealt mainly with worldwide social and political problems.

These differences of attitude to the Diaspora and, therefore, to the Holocaust, were the expression of deep convictions which cut across all the social and political sectors of the Yishuv. In the case of Hamahanot Ha'olim they were linked to a long-standing ideological and political

³⁴ The heroic period of intensive settlement under threat of armed attack, 1936-9; see *KM* i. 315-29.

³⁵ See e.g. Katznelson, 'Destruction and Estrangement' (1934), in *id.*, *Writings*, vi. 365-7; *id.*, 'On the Right to be Confused' (1940), *ibid.* ix. 241-66; and cf. Shapira, *Berl*, 318-23.

schism in the movement, and were one of the proximate causes of its division in June 1945.³⁶ But the same fundamental viewpoints were, and indeed still are, to be found in all parts of the Yishuv, including the kibbutz movement.

³⁶ Kafkafi, *Years of the Mahanot Olim*, vol. ii, ch. 22.

The War Years: Settlement, Economics, and Politics

IN many respects the development of the Yishuv during the war began as a continuation of the peace. The practical applications of Ben-Gurion's demand to fight the White Paper were modified as a result of the outbreak of war. His call for a civil rebellion backed by mass illegal immigration¹ was retracted, and, as already mentioned, attempts were made to co-operate with the British authorities on such matters as mobilization of volunteers for the armed forces. The final act of 'fighting Zionism', in February 1940, took the form of mass protests and demonstrations in the wake of the publication of ordinances drastically limiting Jewish land purchases in accordance with the White Paper policy. From then on the struggle with the Mandatory government was restricted to three matters which had been the source of conflict for many years: self-defence, immigration, and settlement. The first of these has already been discussed. The others are the subject of the first sections of this chapter.

IMMIGRATION AND ABSORPTION

As the Germans began to tighten their hold on Europe, the attempts to rescue as many Jews as possible became more desperate, and the possibilities of doing so more restricted. Both the Mossad and the others who had engaged in this work before the outbreak of the war continued as best they could to organize groups of refugees in ever more threatening and hostile circumstances, and to look for ships, which became increasingly difficult to find. Their task was not made easier by British efforts to influence the governments of the Balkan countries, now the only possible escape route for organized groups, and thus prevent illegal immigration close to its source. Despite this, one ship of the Mossad, and half a dozen organized by other institutions or individuals, managed to reach the coast of Palestine in the early years of the war. The British authorities, stubbornly pursuing the White Paper policy, at first responded by de-

¹ The 'fighting Zionism' programme: see *KM* i. 304, 322-3.

ducting the number of immigrants from the quota of certificates issued. This stage of the struggle reached a grim climax with two incidents which shocked the Yishuv. In November 1940 the SS *Patria* was sunk by the Hagana in Haifa harbour, with the loss of more than 200 lives, in a mismanaged attempt to prevent the re-transportation of its passengers, refugees from Europe. And in February 1942 a tiny vessel, the *Struma*, carrying more than 750 refugees, was sunk in the Black Sea after being prevented, largely through British influence, from attempting to make its way to Palestine.²

By this time war conditions, and the preoccupation of the Yishuv with more pressing problems of survival, had put a stop to any significant attempts to save the Jews of Europe. But the Mossad continued to exist. Operating mainly from Constantinople, its agents attempted to make contact with the Jews in the occupied countries, and in 1944 began to organize immigration through the Balkans and from a number of countries in the Middle East. From 1943 onwards, when the facts about the enormities of the Holocaust were known, the British government began to admit a certain number of legal immigrants into the country, though without deviating from the allocation of certificates envisaged in the White Paper. By now, the Mossad was the only institution organizing illegal immigration. It enjoyed the support of the Zionist movement, though it still suffered severely from lack of funds, as well as the objective difficulties caused by the war and the final stages of Nazi occupation. But in 1944 and the first half of 1945 it managed to save more than 5,000 Jews from occupied Europe, as well as about 3,500 from the countries of the Levant. By the end of the war it was well prepared for the continuation of this effort.

Although the number of immigrants was pitifully small when seen in the perspective of the Holocaust, it added appreciably to the population of the Yishuv, which grew from some 450,000 in 1939 to 554,000 in May 1945. Many of the new immigrants found their way to the kibbutzim and, together with the graduates of the youth movements of the Yishuv who were now beginning to play a greater part in kibbutz settlement, increased the kibbutz population from 24,000 at the outbreak of war to about 32,500 at its end.³

² Avneri, '*Velos*' to '*Taurus*', chs. 7-16; Dinur, *Hagana*, iii. 152-61. The sinking of the *Patria* was believed in the Yishuv to have been the result of a suicide attempt by its passengers. The survivors were allowed to stay in Palestine. The passengers in another boat which arrived at the same time were deported to Mauritius for the duration of the war.

³ See Appendix 2.

SETTLEMENT

The six months before the outbreak of war were marked by a wave of settlement in protest against the White Paper, including the establishment of eight new kibbutzim and moshavim in a single night in May 1939, with no prior notice to the British authorities. These were all tower and stockade operations. But, in contrast to those which preceded them, the settlers left their base at night, and preparations were well advanced by the time the police or army could arrive.

Following the concentrated efforts of the previous three years, funds for new settlement were short, and the number of groups available was limited as a result of widespread recruitment to the armed forces. None the less, settlement continued throughout the war years. Now more than ever its strategy was dictated by the desire to spread the Jewish presence as widely as possible, thus frustrating the aims of the Land Regulations and reducing the possibility of a division of western Palestine in any post-war settlement.⁴

By 1940 the Arab revolt had died down, and there began a period of acute shortages of manpower, land, and resources for developing new farms. Even so, during the critical years from the outbreak of the war until the military turning-point of late 1942 twenty-five new settlements were established, seventeen of them kibbutzim. The tower and stockade structure was no longer needed, but living conditions were still rudimentary in the extreme: tents and other forms of temporary accommodation were the rule.

Apart from the strengthening of Jewish-held areas, particularly in Upper Galilee, this period is notable for its southern thrust.⁵ In October 1939 Beit Ha'arava, at the northern tip of the Dead Sea, was founded. Its members worked for the Palestine Potash Company and attempted to make their land fit for agricultural use by systematically washing the soil. In the same month moshav Kfar Warburg was set up a few kilometres beyond Be'er Tuvia, for many years the southernmost point of Jewish settlement, and in 1941 another two kibbutzim were founded in the northern Negev. There were some 40,000 dunams of Jewish-owned land in this region, and settlement strategy was moving in this direction.

The Negev, the desert area which took up some 30 per cent of the area of Mandatory Palestine, had been excluded from the Jewish state in the Peel Commission's proposals. But the Zionist leaders had long

⁴ Orren, *Settlement*, ch. 3; Bein, *History*, ch. 9.

⁵ Orren, *Settlement*, 92-3, 118-22.

considered it a possible area of settlement, and the Jewish National Fund had acquired land at a number of isolated spots. The imagination of the Zionist planners was fired by the recommendations of Walter C. Lowdermilk, an American expert on soil conservation and development, who had toured the country in 1939 and suggested using the waters of the Jordan to irrigate the Negev.⁶

The most difficult and dramatic project which resulted from these plans was the establishment of three 'outposts' (*mitzvim*: literally, observation-points) in the Negev. Despite its attraction for geopolitical reasons, the Negev was largely unknown to the Jews. The outposts were, in effect, experimental stations, each manned by about a dozen members of a settlement group (two kibbutzim and one moshav) most of whose members remained in the north. Almost completely isolated, in exceedingly difficult climatic conditions, with a minimum of water, they attempted to establish which crops could be grown, whether there were local sources of water, and how it was possible to create a community under these harsh and unfamiliar conditions. These, the cautious beginnings of settlement in the desert area south of Be'er Sheva, were initiated in 1943 as part of the general revival of settlement operations in that year.

In the early years of the war most of the Zionist leadership was pre-occupied with its relations with the British government and administration, and ways of supporting the Allied war effort. From an early stage, however, Ben-Gurion was active in promoting plans for the Zionist role in the post-war world. In May 1942 he succeeded in persuading the American Zionist movement to adopt the Biltmore Programme, which proposed the establishment of a 'Jewish Commonwealth' as part of the post-war settlement. Although this plan did not overtly accept the principle of the partition of Palestine, there were many in the Zionist movement who saw in it a revival of the pre-war proposal for a Jewish state in part of Palestine, and it aroused violent controversy. But it served, during some of the darkest days of the war, to focus attention on the need to prepare for the changes which would undoubtedly take place in the wake of an Allied victory. With the change in the fortunes of war from late 1942 it was possible to take some of the practical steps implied by the political demands of the Zionist movement.

Virtually all the Zionist parties agreed that the final political settlement in Palestine would be in large measure a function of the demographic and political shape of the Yishuv. So, in the absence of any

⁶ Lowdermilk, *Palestine, Land of Promise*.

significant immigration in war conditions, settlement once again stood high on the Zionist agenda.⁷ Altogether, twenty-four new settlements were established between January 1943 and the end of the European war in May 1945. The updated concept of settlement strategy involved the creation of new Jewish strong-points over wide areas, straining the available manpower and finances to the utmost. This led to the creation of a new form of settlement: *he'ahzuyot* (holding units). Living in tents, makeshift shanties, and wooden packing-cases, their members gradually created permanent buildings and means of sustenance and defence, adding to their numbers as soon as this became practicable. As in earlier periods, the bulk of the settlers were youth movement graduates organized in *plugot*, anxious to create permanent kibbutzim at the earliest opportunity. Because of the difficulties in creating and maintaining *he'ahzuyot*, many of these groups were split up for several years and underwent severe difficulties in their efforts to build up a permanent social framework. In several cases these conditions led to the break-up of the original group. In others, they served to strengthen the solidarity of the *pluga*, which then became the social nucleus of a permanent kibbutz. Five permanent settlements founded during the war (including the three outposts in the Negev), and four more in the immediate post-war period, owe their beginnings to this system.⁸

During the war twelve kibbutzim and two moshavim were established in the Negev, including the three outposts. Second in importance was Upper Galilee. This was thought to be a crucial area both because of its potential command of the headwaters of the Jordan, and because of the danger that it might be cut off from the rest of the Yishuv. Seven kibbutzim and three moshavim were set up in this region, in the hope that it could become self-sufficient in food and defence in case of need.

Kibbutz Kfar Etzion, south of Jerusalem, which had been abandoned under attack in 1936, was re-founded as the centre of a wide area of Jewish settlement; and a kibbutz and moshav were set up between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. Here again, the political implications were clear. In the Peel partition plan, Kfar Etzion was in the Arab-controlled area, while a British-administered corridor was to link Jerusalem with the coastal strip. Before the war the Yishuv had not given priority to these areas, assuming that the British would be in the country for an indefinite period. Now this assumption could no longer be made, and the new strategy had to take into account the need to safeguard Jerusalem and its

⁷ Orren, *Settlement*, ch. 4.

⁸ *Ibid.* 102-3; Brenner, *Mobilized Hakhsharot*, 5-25.

environs. The relative paucity of new settlements here was the result of the difficulty of acquiring land in this hilly region, with its relatively dense Arab population.

In addition to these regions, new settlements were added to areas such as the Hefer valley and the hinterland of Haifa, when land and local conditions permitted. These amounted to one village, nine moshavim, and ten kibbutzim.⁹

The spurt of settlement in 1943, when fourteen new kibbutzim were established, stands in sharp contrast not only to the previous danger-fraught period, but also to the two years which followed. The Jewish National Fund's shortage of land reserves, the Land Regulations, the fact that new funds could not be acquired because of war conditions, and the success of the Arab nationalist forces in influencing potential sellers combined to produce a situation of scarcity unparalleled in the history of Jewish land purchase.

During this period the weight of kibbutz settlement as against the establishment of other types of rural community was even greater than in the pre-war years—75 per cent, compared with 67 per cent between 1936 and 1939. There were many reasons for this. Since 1937 the increased security risk and the slump in the citrus market had led to the virtual cessation of private settlement, and the Zionist authorities were able to decide on priorities according to their conception of the national interest. Also, from the beginning of the tower and stockade period the officials of the Histadrut's Agricultural Centre, whose recommendations were usually decisive, had shown a distinct preference for kibbutzim as against moshavim. This tendency was reinforced by the fact that the Jewish Agency refused to accept unmarried men and women for moshav settlement; so kibbutz groups were given preference for the more dangerous enterprises.¹⁰ A report presented to the chiefs of staff of the Hagana at the beginning of 1943, which included a comprehensive plan for strategic settlement over the coming years, suggested that the kibbutz was the best form of social structure for settlement in new and hostile areas, and that moshavim should be set up primarily in areas where already existing settlement had to be reinforced. In tactical terms, the reason given was the more compact structure of the kibbutz as against the moshav, whose smallholdings and living quarters were necessarily more scattered, and the greater solidarity and discipline of the kibbutz community. Although it is not clear whether this report was officially

⁹ Orren, *Settlement*, 242-4, gives a full list of wartime settlements.

¹⁰ Oren, 'Settlement Policy'.

adopted by the Hagana, there is no doubt that it expressed the generally accepted view, which was clearly reflected in practical policy.¹¹

A further advantage of the kibbutz over the moshav was the greater availability of manpower for new settlement. The enhanced standing of the kibbutzim during the tower and stockade period had led to a growth in the number and strength of the youth movements which required their graduates to join a kibbutz, both in the Yishuv and in the Diaspora; so the number of *plugot* waiting for settlement increased steadily. The reserves of the moshavim, which had no direct link to the youth movements, were very much smaller.

From 1944, in the wake of the agreement between the Palmach and the youth movements, groups occupying *he'ahzuyot* formed an important part of the Palmach. Even before this formal contract, however, fifteen groups which combined agricultural work with Palmach training had been in existence. They founded six new kibbutzim and a moshav, and reinforced a number of kibbutzim.¹²

Thus, with the resumption of relatively intensive settlement from 1943 onwards, the experience of the previous seven years was seen to confirm the status of the kibbutz as the spearhead of the pioneering efforts of the Yishuv: in the areas of greatest importance, most danger, and most difficult conditions—southern Palestine, the Negev, and Upper Galilee—there were eleven new kibbutzim, as against three moshavim, while in the other regions five kibbutzim and three moshavim were founded.

In addition to the geographical changes in settlement strategy, the second half of the war marked a change in the national origins of the founding groups. Since 1930, graduates of the youth movements of the Yishuv had formed an active part of the kibbutz movement, but their numbers had been small compared with those of European origin: in 1923 almost 80 per cent of kibbutz members originated from eastern Europe (Russia, Poland—including Galicia—and Romania), and this proportion had declined only slightly by 1939. Within the next decade, however, there was a marked decrease in the percentage of eastern Europeans: from 73 to 40 per cent. This change was largely due to the increasing number of groups of German- and Palestinian-born pioneers, whose proportion had grown to about 30 per cent of the total by 1945. In 1939 there was still a backlog of European pioneers waiting for permanent settlement, and they founded a number of new kibbutzim during

¹¹ Orren, *Settlement*, 126-8; Shiran, 'Settlement Policy', 21-4.

¹² Brenner, *Mobilized Hakhsharot*, 17-25, 85.

and after the war. From 1943, with routes from the Diaspora closed, the proportion of groups consisting entirely of locally born members grew significantly, reaching 20 per cent by the end of the war.¹³

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS

With the outbreak of war the economic crisis which had begun at the end of 1935 became even more severe. With no shipping available to transport Palestine's major export, citrus fruit, and little internal demand for the services and construction work which had dominated the economy of the Yishuv for most of the 1930s, unemployment reached its peak in 1940, and was mitigated at this stage only by the fact that many of the unemployed volunteered for the armed forces.¹⁴

The turning-point came in 1942, with the creation in Cairo of the Middle Eastern Supply Centre, among whose functions was the encouragement of local industry which could supply the British forces with their growing requirements for goods and services. The result was a swift expansion of the Yishuv's industry, and adaptation of its agriculture, to meet the demands of the war effort. From 1943 onwards the Yishuv was, in effect, in a state of over-employment, and its economy developed rapidly in new directions.

The local economy became almost self-sufficient: there was virtually no market for citrus crops, and as much as possible of the food consumed in the country had to be locally grown. By the end of 1943 the quantity of wheat, fruit, honey, dairy products, and poultry produced had increased by some 60 per cent compared with pre-war figures. Moreover, the presence of the British army created a demand for manufactured goods and a wide variety of services which had not been required on such a scale before the war. For the kibbutzim, this reinforced a number of trends which had already become apparent in the mid-1930s. Industry, particularly in areas such as food packing and preserving, was greatly expanded, and service branches such as metalwork and carpentry supplied the needs of the British services and their supporting population. The war years also saw the beginning of a branch which was to develop into one of the mainstays of the kibbutz economy. Several kibbutzim were situated in hill areas, where their strategic value for the Yishuv was inestimable, but their means of making a living scanty in the extreme. In the relatively secure atmosphere of the wartime years they

¹³ See Near, 'Mandatory Period', table 16.

¹⁴ Halevi, *Economic Development*, 37, 62.

began to capitalize on two of their basic assets, scenery and cool air, by opening 'rest homes'—often simply vacating members' houses in order to accommodate holidaymakers. This was the beginning of the kibbutz tourist industry.¹⁵

By 1943 the demand for food, goods, and services supporting the war effort had reversed the downward trend in the kibbutz economy which had begun in 1939. One indication of this is the nutritional standard, which fell constantly until the end of 1942, and then began to rise to above the pre-war level.¹⁶ The upward trend was intensified by the existence of new opportunities and the expansion of old ones. Although the Jewish National Fund invested much effort and money in circumventing the restrictions on land purchase set by the 1939 White Paper, its activities in promoting new settlement were comparatively limited. It was therefore able to devote a higher proportion of its resources than previously to extending the area of already existing settlements, thus ensuring them means of livelihood commensurate with their growing population. The Mekorot Company, now coming into its own, broadened its area of activities, intensified the search for water, and improved its techniques for discovering new sources and exploiting existing ones.¹⁷ The results can be seen in Table 3.1.

With a high proportion of their adult manpower mobilized in the army, the Palmach, or the police, the kibbutzim were hard put to exploit

TABLE 3.1 Kibbutz land holdings and irrigation, 1936-45 (000s of dunams)

Year	Total area	Irrigated area
1936	131	15
1940	229	33
1945	349	57

Source: Barkai, *Growth Patterns*, 109. These figures differ slightly from those in *UAW Report* (1945), 41, and *UAW Report* (1949), 63, but the proportions are not significantly different.

¹⁵ *UAW Report* (1945), 31-2. It may be added in parenthesis that Giv'at Brenner had foreshadowed this development with two local enterprises: a cafeteria in the neighbouring *moshava*, Rehovot; and a guest-house within the kibbutz, established with the financial help of an American woman who joined the kibbutz and managed the guest-house for many years. But it was only during the war that this branch began to spread to other kibbutzim.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 55.
¹⁷ On the development of water resources and the expansion of Mekorot during the war, see *UAW Report* (1945), 40-2.

TABLE 3.2 Productive employment in kibbutzim by main economic branch (%)

Year	Agriculture	Industry	Investment ^a	Outside work	Other ^b
1938/9	28.4	8.9	7.5	40.5	14.7
1942/3	43.7	15.0	6.7	20.5	14.1
1945/6	45.5	14.2	5.9	19.5	14.9

Source: *UAW Report* (1949), 12.

Notes

^a Branches which have not yet begun to yield income.

^b Defence and administration.

their resources to the full. The first result was a drastic reduction in the number of those engaged in outside work: a very welcome source of income, but one which could most easily be spared when other priorities appeared. One such priority was the development of a wide variety of industrial and semi-industrial enterprises, ranging from mechanical workshops and carpentry shops to canning factories (see Table 3.2).

A further source of strain on the straitened manpower of the kibbutzim lay in their demographic structure. From October 1939 to October 1944 the number of working adults in the kibbutzim increased by 33 per cent, while the number of children rose by 138 per cent overall, the greatest increase being in the younger settlements. The proportion of working days devoted to maternity and child care in kibbutzim of all ages grew steadily throughout the war years, and, although the number of those engaged in productive work also increased, it was far from being commensurate with the absolute increase in the adult population.¹⁸

Those responsible for the administration of the system did their best to solve the problems caused by lack of manpower by demanding greater effort. Annual leave was reduced, and the number of special 'mobilizations' increased in order to deal with backlogs in various branches. Working groups of various sorts—Youth Aliya, youth movement training groups, Palmach units, and the like—helped to ease the strain. But in many cases this was not enough to solve the problem. The result was that a number of kibbutzim began to employ outside labour, thus introducing a problem which would continue to dog the kibbutz movement for the next fifty years.

Although the prosperity of the last four years of the war led to further

¹⁸ *UAW Report* (1949), 65-7.

development and consolidation of the kibbutz economy, its effects were not altogether positive. War conditions led to inflation of 254 per cent over this period (compared with 135 per cent in England, and 130 per cent in the US). Although agreements linking wages in industry with the cost-of-living index were signed in 1942, and in other branches of the economy in 1943, it was not until close to the end of the war that the demand for labour led to a tangible increase in real income: in 1942 the average wage for Jewish workers was 79.9 per cent of the 1939 level, and in September 1944 102.3 per cent; and this after a deflationary period in which real wages had dropped by 12.8 per cent within three years.¹⁹ These conditions were particularly hard on the *plugot* and the younger kibbutzim, a considerable proportion of whose income depended on outside work. Nor did the established kibbutzim fare very much better as producers: although prices in general rose as the local economy was swollen by the demands of the armed services, the cost of raw materials also rose constantly, and the fact that prices of several agricultural products were controlled reduced their profitability. In addition, spare parts for tractors and other agricultural equipment were scarce, and the machinery was exploited to the utmost, often at a high cost in efficiency and a serious increase in the depreciation rate. The result was a fall in the profitability of the kibbutz economy: in the year ending October 1945, the sum total of the balance-sheets of all the kibbutzim was a loss of £P60,000 as against an overall profit of £P34,000 in October, 1939. In terms of their basic capital assets, the veteran kibbutzim ended the war with a positive, though greatly reduced, balance. But those founded from 1930 onwards showed considerable deficits, and a serious increase in short-term as against long-term liabilities.²⁰

These fluctuations were not only the result of the objective factors described here. The economic policies of the kibbutz movements were based largely on a concept widely known at the time as 'heroic economics'. This approach, which was first adopted by the Kibbutz Me'uhad with its slogan of the 'great and growing kibbutz', was espoused to a large degree by the other movements during the years of prosperity in 1933-6, and again from 1943 onwards. It called for the greatest possible expansion, in order to develop an infrastructure for absorption of immigrants and new settlement—even at the cost of increasing the indebtedness of individual kibbutzim and of the kibbutz movement as a whole. Joseph Shapira, one of the leaders of the moshav movement, which was

¹⁹ Horovitz, *Palestinian Economy*, 200, 235-6.

²⁰ *UAW Report* (1945), 62-72; *UAW Report* (1949), 52-63.

subject to the same pressures as the kibbutzim, pointed up the contrast between the two systems:

In the matter of [economic] expansion, there is a difference between the kibbutz and the moshav. The moshav member expands and invests in his farm if he has the [financial] means to do so, or the matter is absolutely essential. If the intensification of his farm [i.e. the introduction of irrigation] enables him make his living from a smaller area, the excess land will be used for the absorption of new families: this is the moshav's contribution to immigrant absorption and new settlement. The kibbutz, on the other hand, retains its land, and absorbs new members as its economy expands and becomes more intensive. Every investment, therefore—whether the kibbutz is financially capable of undertaking it or not—is directed to absorbing new members. That is why the investments of the kibbutzim have increased during the war so much more than those of the moshavim. . . . From 1938 to 1944 the increase in investments of the moshavim was 100 per cent, and of the kibbutzim 250 per cent.²¹

The essence of Shapira's criticism of the kibbutzim is in the words 'whether the kibbutz is financially capable of undertaking it or not'; for during these years the kibbutzim's debts both to the national authorities and to banks and other sources of credit increased far more than those of the moshavim. The doctrine of 'heroic economics' accepted this as a natural consequence of the fact that the kibbutzim were performing tasks of national importance, and were therefore entitled to support from institutions such as the Jewish Agency and the Histadrut; and indeed, at this time the question of 'conversion'—grants from the national institutions to recycle debts of kibbutzim and moshavim—was first broached, though the programme did not come into effect until 1947.²²

Despite certain inherent weaknesses in the economic structure of the kibbutzim—in particular, their dependence on outside sources for capital development, and a degree of unavoidable waste—they continued to play a major part in the development of the Yishuv. Since the mid-1930s the national funds had been raising money for the support of agricultural settlement from commercial sources, and the doubts expressed by the leaders of the Jewish Agency about the viability of the kibbutz society and economy in the early years of the decade had been

²¹ *UAW Report (1945)*, 55.

²² *Ibid.* 56-7; *UAW Report (1949)*, 55. In addition to the factors already mentioned, one of the major causes of the debts of kibbutzim and moshavim alike was the inability of the Zionist funds, particularly the Foundation Fund (*Keren Hayesod*), to provide the full sum required for investment and development in the first years of their existence. Thus, many settlements were saddled with serious debts from an early stage.

repressed, if not forgotten.²³ The combination of personal sacrifice and initiative on the part of the kibbutzim and financial support from outside sources were generally seen to be a recipe for economic progress in the complex circumstances of the war period.

THE POLITICS OF THE KIBBUTZ MOVEMENTS

In the previous volume I sketched the development of the political doctrines and alliances of the three main kibbutz movements until the outbreak of war: the growing, though informal, influence of the leaders of Hever Hakvutzot within Mapai; the independent political stand of the Kibbutz Artzi, rooted in the principle of ideological collectivism, and the foundation and growth of its urban ally, the Socialist League; and the development among the majority of the Kibbutz Me'uhad of an oppositionist stance to the Mapai leadership, leading to an alliance with like-minded groups in the urban branches of Mapai to form Faction B, which by 1940 was organized on a nationwide basis. The events of the war, and the controversies they engendered, were to crystallize these groupings even further.

The Kibbutz Me'uhad

Berl Katznelson's campaign for unification of the kibbutz movement, which began in 1935,²⁴ had produced a minute majority within the Kibbutz Me'uhad in 1939. But Tabenkin and his supporters maintained their control of the administrative bodies of the movement by a series of adroit manœuvres, including, at one point, Tabenkin's threat to resign. The opposition were not prepared to wage an all-out struggle on this issue: the need to mobilize the kibbutzim for the war effort called forth their instincts of loyalty, and prompted acceptance of the policies and personalities which had been at the centre of the movement for so many years. Despite spirited protests at their under-representation, they eventually knuckled under. The continued domination of the movement by Tabenkin and his supporters was assured, at least for the time being.²⁵

The campaign to unify the kibbutz movement had failed. But it had crystallized a more or less united opposition within the Kibbutz Me'uhad where there had hitherto been no more than a number of dis-

²³ For a fuller discussion of this point see *KM* i. 171-2, 183.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 346-50.

²⁵ Asaf, 'Political Conflict', 49-53; Hadari, *The Split*, 178-90.

contented groups and individuals. At the same time, it increased the hostility and apprehensions of the majority, and its leaders' fear of becoming a beleaguered minority in the kibbutz movement. As a result, their search for partners had taken on a new urgency: at Mapai's Rehovot conference in 1938, when the Kibbutz Me'uhad leadership was under attack from all directions, the first feelers for the alliance with the Tel Aviv 'rebels', soon to become the core of the urban Faction B, were put out. Thus the unification campaign ultimately led to the establishment of an oppositionist block within Mapai, led by the political activists of the Kibbutz Me'uhad.²⁶

Even though Tabenkin and his henchmen were still well entrenched in the leadership of the movement throughout the war, one thing had changed: the opposition was fighting back. Although its organization was loose and informal, its leaders met from time to time, occasionally even holding open meetings of their supporters, and maintained their connection with the leaders of Mapai, particularly Berl Katznelson. From 1942 onwards there was a more established organization of the political minority, who numbered between 30 and 40 per cent of the Kibbutz Me'uhad, divided unequally between different kibbutzim and areas of settlement.²⁷

The alliance between the Kibbutz Me'uhad and the urban opposition was a clear threat to the Mapai's party leadership. Ben-Gurion understood the position very well. But it was not until 1942 that he had time and opportunity—and the stimulus of his need for a clear-cut decision on the Biltmore Programme—to deal with the matter. By then, the existence of factions within Mapai at a national level had become an established fact, and its institutions were chosen by proportional representation of faction lists. When he returned from the United States in the spring of 1942, the attempt to change the organizational structure of the party and to ensure support for his political programme by abolishing the 'regime of factions' was at the head of his agenda.²⁸ It remained on Mapai's agenda over the coming three years, during a series of manœuvres which eventually led to the withdrawal of Faction B from the party to establish the independent L'ahdut Ha'avoda.²⁹ During these

²⁶ Asaf, 'Political Conflict', 37-44; Kanari, *Hakibbutz Hameuchad*, 204-7.

²⁷ Hadari, *The Split*, 165-76.

²⁸ Teveth, *The Burning Ground*, iii. 378-82, 432; Avizohar, *Mapai*, chs. 14, 15.

²⁹ I have adopted this name as being closest to the party's formal title: Hatmua L'ahdut Ha'avoda (the Movement for Labour Unity). This name deliberately echoed that of the historical party, Ahdut Ha'avoda, which had joined Hapoel Hatzair in 1930 to form Mapai. In 1946 L'ahdut Ha'avoda joined with the Left Poalei Zion party to form Ahdut H'avoda/Poalei Zion, which I shall call Ahdut Ha'avoda, as it was popularly known.

three years the leaders of the Kibbutz Me'uhad had no intention of leaving Mapai; indeed, as a central force in the faction which represented both the urban underprivileged and the constructive forces in the Yishuv, they fully expected to reach a majority or, at the very least, to attain enough strength to have a share in policy-making and in the leadership of the Histadrut, which was dominated by Mapai. At the decisive Kfar Vitkin conference in October 1942, when Mapai decided to abolish its internal factions, the leaders of Faction B adopted a policy of demonstrative silence. In the nineteen months that followed they did their best to ignore the decision, while forgoing none of their policies. But Ben-Gurion proved to be a better tactician, and more in touch with the spirit of the Yishuv.

Even after the foundation of L'ahdut Ha'avoda in May 1944 its leaders were convinced that they would amass sufficient electoral strength to make them essential as coalition partners if Mapai's hegemony were to be preserved: Tabenkin spoke as if his aim were still to reform Mapai rather than to defeat it.³⁰ But Ben-Gurion strengthened his party immensely by a skilful recruiting campaign and, although he never managed to bring Mapai to an absolute majority in the Yishuv or the Zionist movement, he maintained control of the Histadrut, and was able to choose his partners in the Zionist executive. For the Kibbutz Me'uhad, this meant the end of its traditional political role as a powerful element within the 'mass party' which controlled the destinies of Zionism. It would not return to this position until the establishment of the Israel Labour Party in 1968.

The Kibbutz Artzi

Throughout the late 1930s the Kibbutz Artzi had debated the question of the framework in which it would conduct its political activities. From discussions with the leaders of Mapai in the early days of the war it became clear that neither side was prepared to compromise on the organizational issue: the Kibbutz Artzi insisted on remaining a united bloc within Mapai, while the leaders of that party, already occupied with the separatist tendencies of Faction B, were not prepared to accept another such body into their ranks.

From then on, events had a dynamic of their own. The Socialist League grew gradually, from a few dozen members in 1935 to some 600 in 1942. The economic recession of the early war years led to increased

³⁰ Asaf, 'Political Conflict', 190-5.

discontent among the urban workers. Mapai's control of the Histadrut meant the continuation of nepotism and corruption in many of its institutions, and when, from 1942 onwards, the economy began to recover, the Mapai leaders' policy of co-operation with the government on many trade union issues aroused a good deal of opposition. Against this background, the opposition parties in the Histadrut—the Socialist League, Left Poalei Zion, and Faction B, even before its formal break from Mapai—gained strength, and began to form local coalitions in order to defeat the Mapai establishment. In the elections to the fifth conference of the Histadrut in November 1941, the joint list of Hashomer Hatzair and the Socialist League received 19.2 per cent of the votes, as against 69.3 per cent for Mapai, a very considerable achievement compared with Hashomer Hatzair's 8 per cent in the previous elections in 1932. In all, 5,800 kibbutz members voted for the combined list, and 11,000 in towns and *moshavot*.³¹ The work of the Socialist League, supported by a cadre of leaders and organizers from the kibbutzim of the Kibbutz Artzi, had given that movement a new position on the political map of the Yishuv. Its leaders began to demand an end to their subordinate status, and the formation of a united party which would embrace town and kibbutz alike.³²

Within the Kibbutz Artzi there were still a few who believed in an eventual union with Mapai. Others were prepared to continue the state of affairs which had obtained since the mid-1930s, whereby the movement remained in firm control of political activity, with the Socialist League as a small subordinate body. A third group pressed for an increase in the movement's political activity, which would mean creating a political party with branches in towns and kibbutzim.

As so often happened in the Kibbutz Artzi, the discussion lasted for several years, until a virtual consensus was reached at the movement's conference in Mishmar Ha'emek at the end of 1941. The party was to be formed 'when the conditions were ripe': in other words, after further strengthening of the urban element. Meanwhile, the Socialist League continued to work within the Histadrut, often in concert with the other parties of the left; a daily newspaper (*Mishmar*, later to be renamed *Al hamishmar*) was founded to propagate the movement's political line; and the Hashomer Hatzair faction remained an active oppositionist element

³¹ Some of these were kibbutz members, in *plugot* which voted according to their geographical situation; but even so these figures show that the Kibbutz Artzi had a significant following in the urban sector.

³² Zait, *Pioneers*, 74-6.

within the Zionist movement. By 1946, when the Hashomer Hatzair party was officially founded, it had already acquired a *de facto* existence.

By 1946, therefore, each of the biggest kibbutz movements had defined its own political stance, and was supported by a movement based on the towns and *moshavot* which supported its policies and shared the brunt of its political activities. It remains to analyse their political platforms, and point out the similarities and differences between them.

Issues

Both Hashomer Hatzair and L'ahdut Ha'avoda can be defined as a left-wing opposition to Mapai, and their policies coincided in many respects. Both of them supported, in ideology and practice, the principle of 'constructive Zionism' and saw in continued immigration, absorption, and settlement—particularly, though not only, in the kibbutzim—the heart of the Zionist project. In the area of Zionist politics both opposed the Biltmore Programme (though, as we shall see, for different reasons), and both supported the 'mufti' faction in the uniform—mufti controversy. Both Hashomer Hatzair and L'ahdut Ha'avoda were activist in trade union matters, and attacked the Mapai establishment in the Histadrut. They were also united on another issue: their attitude to the Soviet Union.

In the Yishuv, as in other democratic societies, the German attack on Russia and the alliance of the USSR and the Allied powers was a turning-point in the attitude of the left—including the Kibbutz Artzi and the majority in the Kibbutz Me'uhad. These movements now saw participation in the war as support for the worldwide anti-Fascist struggle, rather than for British imperialism in a lukewarm alliance with other anti-German elements. While they continue to press for recruitment to the Palmach, their support for the Allied war effort was now far less qualified than in the first two years of the war.

From the early 1930s the ideological foundations of Hashomer Hatzair had been Marxist, but its leaders' attitude to Communism and the Soviet Union, while sympathetic on the whole, was independent and critical. There was, however, a group within the movement whose view of the Soviet regime was much more favourable. Until 1942 they were a tolerated minority. But with the invasion of the Soviet Union by the Germans and the heroic stand of the Russian people, the whole of the movement came closer to their position. Like the leaders of the Kibbutz

Me'uhad, its leaders began to see the Russian victory as the result of the superiority of Soviet society and the far-sighted planning of its leaders; and that planning included the very acts which had previously been condemned by the leaders of Hashomer Hatzair. Ya'akov Hazan, who had up to now been careful to distinguish between the dictatorship of the proletariat (a necessary stage in the development of socialist society) and the dictatorship of the party (a distortion of that idea), now began to justify the one-party state. Perhaps the most tragic expression of this change can be seen in the contrast between two incidents involving Meir Ya'ari, one of the founders of Hashomer Hatzair and still, together with Hazan, its foremost political and educational leader. At the outbreak of the war he had spoken with pride of the Zionist underground in Soviet-occupied territory, and defended the right of the Jews—including members of Hashomer Hatzair—to act against Soviet oppression. In 1943 a number of Jewish soldiers reached Palestine through the Soviet near east, in the Free Polish Brigade of Colonel Anders, and gave eyewitness accounts of the iniquities of the Communist regime. Ya'ari's view was that this was

unfortunately, not the first time that good comrades, members of our movements, have given us a distorted picture of Russia. They have photographed Soviet Russia upside-down . . . How can the great liberation movement in the Soviet Union be seen in the light of the black market in Bukhara, Tashkent, and Samarkand? . . . I know that your wanderings and your suffering have deranged you.³³

Hashomer Hatzair had entered its Stalinist period.

A similar development was to be seen in the Kibbutz Me'uhad. The apologetic attitude of Tabenkin and others to the Russo-German agreement of 1939 was the logical development of the pro-Soviet stance which they had adopted in 1934.³⁴ Now, the very aspects of Soviet society and policy of which many in this group (though not always Tabenkin himself) had previously been highly critical—the purges of the 1930s, the lack of democracy, the adulation of Stalin, the attack on Finland—were praised as having been essential preparations for the Russian victory, and positive characteristics of a socialist society struggling to defend itself in a hostile world. Just as the 'cruelty' of Klosova³⁵ had been justified as a

³³ Zait, *Pioneers*, 119-25.

³⁴ See *KM* i. 358.

³⁵ The severe and ascetic regime in this training kibbutz in Poland typified the educational attitude of the Kibbutz Me'uhad between the world wars. For a more detailed account see *KM* i. 108-11.

means to Zionist ends, so were the actions of Stalin viewed as unavoidable steps on the road to a socialist society.³⁶

This change also affected the public image of the left-wing movements. From the time of Stalingrad, enthusiasm for the Soviet Union and its victories grew. By the end of the war, the demand for a political and ideological alliance with 'the forces of tomorrow' was an accepted part of the programmes of both the Kibbutz Artzi and the majority in the Kibbutz Me'uhad, and increased their support among the public at large. It was reinforced by the argument that, having recognized the value of Russian nationalism in the struggle against the Germans and revived many forms of cultural expression which had hitherto been suppressed,³⁷ the Communists would eventually also come to see Zionism as a legitimate expression of Jewish nationalism.

On all these issues there was general agreement between L'ahdut Ha'avoda and Hashomer Hatzair. But, although they both rejected the Biltmore Programme, their positive visions of what Zionist policy should be were quite different.

Hashomer Hatzair's main reason for opposing the plan was that it ignored the possibility of reaching an accommodation with the Arabs, an aspiration which had always been part of its political stance.³⁸ In the 1930s this aspiration had had two aspects: in the present, the promotion of joint Jewish-Arab trade unions, in the hope that common class interests would lead to understanding and co-operation between the two peoples; and, in the undefined future, a 'binational society' in Palestine, in the framework of a socialist Middle Eastern federation. The concept of the joint trade union was never abandoned, but after the Arab revolt it no longer seemed to be the main path to understanding between Jews and Arabs. On the other hand, in 1940 the Kibbutz Artzi established an Arab department which developed a cadre of activists who studied Arab languages and customs and attempted to make contact with the Arabs on the personal and political level.

Politically, however, this activity had to be anchored in an overall policy. By 1942 the concept of binationalism had changed from a distant perspective to a concrete alternative to the 'Jewish commonwealth' proposal: Hashomer Hatzair now envisaged not a binational society but a bi-

³⁶ Kafkafi, *Truth or Faith*, 29-32, 38-40.

³⁷ Including those of cultural minorities. One instance was the work of Yiddish writers and publicists in the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, which made a deep impression on the Jews of the Yishuv. Braslavsky, *Labour Movement*, iii. 245-51.

³⁸ Zait, *Zionism and Peace*, chs. 5-8.

national state.³⁹ Its specific form distinguished it from other proponents of Jewish-Arab *rapprochement* in that it never gave up the demand for Jewish control over Jewish immigration, and aimed to create a Jewish majority. But the Arabs' fear of such a majority was to be allayed by giving equal political power to both communities, regardless of their numbers. This concept was the major plank in Hashomer Hatzair's Zionist platform. In order to forestall the argument that there was no partner to the binationalist plan among the Arabs, the Arab department of the Kibbutz Artzi, together with some of its close political allies, attempted to make contacts among progressive circles in the Arab community, and a number of talks at various levels took place. The results were disappointing: some discussions which seemed promising were terminated when the Arab participants proved to be hostile to any form of Zionism; and contact with the most influential potential ally, Fawzi Hussein, ended with his assassination in 1946. But these disappointments did not lead to any basic change in the policy of Hashomer Hatzair, which continued to advocate a binational state almost up to the establishment of the State of Israel.⁴⁰

In contrast to this complex proposal, L'ahdut Ha'avoda's attitude was simple: the demand for a Jewish commonwealth was a return to the policy of those in Mapai who before the war has been prepared to settle for a truncated Jewish state. It would inevitably lead to the partition of Palestine, and must therefore be opposed at all costs. In opposition to Ben-Gurion's demand that the Zionist movement should use the fluid situation which would arise after the war for its own ends, Tabenkin and his allies preferred to rely on the continuation of the Mandate, while increasing immigration and settlement by all possible means, legal and illegal. When these had sufficiently increased the strength of the Yishuv and the extent of its colonization, the demand for a Jewish state in the whole of Palestine would be irresistible.

L'ahdut Ha'avoda and Left Poalei Zion

At the time of L'ahdut Ha'avoda's foundation and in the early days of its existence, the Kibbutz Me'uhad was dominant in determining its policy, and provided it with leaders, financial support, and much of its organizational machinery. But there was from the first a certain tension between town and kibbutz sections. The urban branches, whose very origins were in their opposition to the Mapai-controlled Histadrut establishment, saw

³⁹ Zait, *Zionism and Peace*, ch. 6.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 276-84.

their main function as protection of the workers, in co-operation with oppositionist bodies such as Left Poalei Zion and the urban branches of Hashomer Hatzair. They aimed at 'unity of the left', while the kibbutz section tended to favour unity of the whole labour movement—that is to say, co-operation with Mapai on the basis of an agreed programme.

The tensions within L'ahdut Ha'avoda were exacerbated by the Kibbutz Me'uhad's difficulties in supplying means and manpower for political activity in the towns. These were the days of recruitment to the Palmach and the Jewish Brigade, of increased settlement activity towards the end of the war, and revival of the pioneering movements in Europe after it. It is no wonder that the town branches complained of neglect, began to chafe under the domination of the kibbutz section, and pressed for co-operation with the other parties of the left to promote their own special interests. The leaders of the Kibbutz Me'uhad viewed such co-operation with deep suspicion. For them, their political differences from Hashomer Hatzair were of far greater importance than the issues on which the urban sections of both parties had common interests; indeed, the more such interests were emphasized, the greater grew the fears of the Kibbutz Me'uhad leadership that their urban supporters would desert them for one of the more militant parties.

Thus, when Left Poalei Zion suggested union with L'ahdut Ha'avoda, Tabenkin and others in the mainstream of the Kibbutz Me'uhad's leadership had grave doubts about the merger. But it was an invitation which they could not refuse: most of the urban section of the party, as well as a prominent group within the Kibbutz Me'uhad, favoured the idea of 'unity of the left', even at the cost of an irrevocable rift with Mapai; and the Kibbutz Me'uhad was simply unable to maintain the urban branches and the party machinery without an accretion of forces.⁴¹

The merger took place in April 1946, and brought about fundamental changes in the character of the party, now known as Ahdut Ha'avoda/Poalei Zion (in common parlance, and below, simply Ahdut Ha'avoda). The urban section was now a clear majority, and within that section were organized groups which strongly favoured unity with Hashomer Hatzair, even at the expense of compromising the activist policy of the Kibbutz Me'uhad leadership and its leanings to a national, rather than a left-wing, coalition in the Histadrut.⁴²

The merger had no appreciable effect on the balance of forces in the labour movement or the Zionist movement as a whole. In the elections to the Zionist Congress in October 1946, Ahdut Ha'avoda and Hashomer

⁴¹ Asaf, 'Political Conflict', 204-25.

⁴² *Ibid.* 218-25.

Hatzair each received 24,000 votes, as against their combined 40,000 two years earlier. Mapai's support declined slightly, but the chief gain was that of the Revisionists, recently returned to the Zionist movement, who received 27,000 votes. Thus, at this critical point in the evolution of Zionist policy, both Ahdut Ha'avoda and Hashomer Hatzair remained relatively powerless minority parties. No less important for the leaders of the Kibbutz Me'uhad was the fact that support for Mapai in their own movement had now increased to 42 per cent.⁴³

By mid-1946 the two main kibbutz movements and their urban allies were firmly committed to oppositionist policies to Mapai, and to a generally pro-Communist view of international relationships. The third major movement, Hever Hakvutzot, stood in strong contrast to them. It had no political organization, nor, indeed, any formal connection with Mapai. But the vast majority of its members supported that party, and a number of its central figures were active in it. By now they had shed the oppositionist tendencies of the early 1930s, and were identified with the central leadership. Its leaders' traditional alliance with Hapoel Hatzair ensured that they were to be found in the moderate element of the party, as distinct from the activists of the Kibbutz Me'uhad—and, more than once, also in opposition to Ben-Gurion. They were firmly in favour of the 'uniform' element in the recruitment controversy. Their social democratic ideology preserved them against the temptation to support Communism. And, although the federative nature of their movement obviated the need for any formal decision, most of them were prepared to accept the Biltmore Programme, even if it might lead to the partition of Palestine. In sharp contrast to the other two major kibbutz movements, they were reliable, though not always conformist, members of the Mapai establishment.

The leaders of the Kibbutz Me'uhad spoke and acted for their movement as a whole. Throughout this period it contained a minority which rejected many of their policies, and was very close to those prevailing in Hever Hakvutzot; but the combined numbers of Mapai supporters in the kibbutz movement as a whole—the Kibbutz Me'uhad minority together with all of Hever Hakvutzot—did not amount to more than a third of the total. Thus, as the Yishuv entered the post-war period, although Mapai undoubtedly exercised the political leadership of the Yishuv, it had to contend with a kibbutz movement more than two-thirds of which was affiliated to parties overtly hostile to its policies.

⁴³ Asaf, 'Political Conflict', 212-13.

Flight and Struggle *The Pre-State Period*

MAY 1945 was unquestionably the beginning of a new era for the Jewish people, as for the rest of the world. But from the point of view of the Yishuv and the Zionist movement it might be better to mark a chronological break at the beginning of 1943, when the fragile military alliance between the British military authorities and the Hagana began to break up. At this stage, too, both the dissident organizations, the IZL and the Lehi,¹ began operations against the British forces after a long period of quiescence. One of the best known, and perhaps the most influential, of their actions was the assassination of Lord Moyne, the British minister of state in the Middle East, by the Lehi in November 1944; this resulted in Churchill's refusal to raise the question of a Palestine settlement in the British cabinet.

With the end of the Second World War there was immense pressure on the British government to contribute to the solution of the Jewish refugee problem by admitting a significant number to Palestine. The Labour administration continued the anti-Zionist policy of its predecessors: it attempted to impose the conditions of the 1939 White Paper, limited Jewish immigration, and, from July 1946, transported those whose ships were intercepted to detention camps in Cyprus. After attempts to reach agreement with the American government on a solution to the Palestine problem, the British government asked the United Nations to deal with the matter. In May 1947 the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) was appointed. At the end of August it recommended the establishment of parallel Jewish and Arab states, and its recommendations were approved by the UN Assembly in November 1947. Immediately local attacks on Jewish areas and lines of communication in Palestine began, and they intensified after the British evacuation, which was completed on 14 May 1948. On the following day the State of Israel came into existence.

¹ IZL (Irgun Zva'i Le'umi) and the Lehi (Lohamei Herut Israel) were small paramilitary formations, ideologically close to the Revisionist movement, who undertook a number of military actions against the British forces and administration, often in defiance of the official leadership of the Yishuv and the Zionist movement.

THE EXODUS FROM EUROPE

The end of the fighting in Europe brought little immediate respite either to the remnants of European Jewry or to the Yishuv. In May 1945 there were in Europe (outside the Soviet Union) about a million Jewish refugees who had survived the countless forms of suffering brought on them by the war. Within a short time it became apparent that the majority were unwilling to begin their lives afresh in Europe. There began—at first spontaneously, and soon afterwards in an organized though often clandestine fashion—the move from eastern Europe to the countries bordering the Mediterranean. This came to be known as the *briha*: the flight from Europe.²

In one sense, the *briha* was a continuation of the Jewish struggle against the Germans. Those who led it were inspired by the belief that they must prove, to themselves and to others, that the Jews could no longer be manipulated, terrorized, and killed at the behest of other peoples. Among them were many who had fought heroically in the ghetto revolts and in partisan actions, particularly in the last two years of the war. At the end of the war they were determined to use the strength, organizational skills, and military knowledge which they had acquired in order to ensure that the horrors of the Holocaust would never be repeated. Some of them thought in terms of revenge, and even conceived schemes for mass retaliation against the German people. This proved to be a minority view. But they all agreed on the need to transfer the great majority of Jewish survivors to a place where they would be masters of their own fate. They believed that that place could only be Jewish Palestine.

One of the outstanding figures in the earlier stages of the *briha* was Abba Kovner, a member of Hashomer Hatzair, and one of the leaders of the Vilna ghetto revolt. He was the central figure in the small group of survivors who took the initiative in spreading the idea of the *briha* and organizing the movement of refugees as early as July 1944. These people, and dozens more, less famous but equally imbued with faith in the Zionist ideal, now became the leaders of the *briha*.

Several factors served to intensify this movement and turn it into a social and political force which eventually played a major part in the creation of the State of Israel. The first was the series of pogroms which took place in Poland shortly after the war. Although these were short-lived and not widespread, and were discouraged by the Polish government, they persuaded the mass of Jews that they were no more welcome

² For detailed accounts of the *briha* see Bauer, *Flight and Rescue*; Dekel, *Briha*.

in their countries of origin than they had been before the war. The second factor was the reluctance of the major powers to accept more than a small number of Jewish refugees into their own countries. There is no doubt that very many of them were interested in migrating to the United States or some other Western country. But when it became apparent that the number of visas to these states was severely limited, the conclusion was clear: they had to look primarily to Palestine for a solution to their problems.

To these historical factors must be added two whose origins were in Palestine itself. The presence of the Jewish Brigade on European soil very quickly became known to the liberated Jews. The Brigade not only helped to locate Jewish survivors and give them material aid, but also became a centre for Zionist activity. Its soldiers organized Hebrew classes and other cultural activities and soon became a vital link in the routes taken by the refugees on their way to Palestine. From an early stage, too, there were other Jews from Palestine in Europe. The parachutists from the Yishuv who survived the war became active in organizing the local Jewish communities, bringing them the Zionist message and directing the host of legal, semi-legal, and flagrantly illegal and dangerous activities which made this vast migration possible. Shortly after the end of the war they were joined by emissaries from Palestine, some working on behalf of the Mossad, others on other missions, but all contributing to the all-out effort to direct the movement of Jews and help them on their way to Palestine.

The *briha*, which began with the formation of a small working group in Rovno, east Poland, in the spring of 1944, ended with the highly publicized attempt of the refugee ship *Exodus 1947* to reach Palestine three years later. During that period some 250,000 Jews left eastern Europe in a deliberate attempt to reach Palestine. Although a small number were absorbed by other countries, the vast majority eventually reached their destination. In the words of Yehuda Bauer:

While [the *briha*'s leaders] directed the people, they did not instigate the exodus. In a very real sense, they were themselves the product of the mass movement—not its prime movers. . . . What they did was to channel this flow intelligently into a reservoir that would turn the very misery of the people into a powerful weapon that would lead them to a new and better life.³

From the point of view of the present study, one further aspect should be noted. The leaders of the revolt were not only the product of their

³ *Flight and Rescue*, 321.

experiences in the war, and of the condition of post-war Jewry in Europe. They themselves were very conscious of their own background in the Zionist youth movements, and saw their activity as the natural outcome of their education and the pioneering values which it had given them. In the words of Yitzhak Zuckerman:

Has our movement [Hechalutz] stood the test of history? It has. Did it give the right education? It did. Our movement has stood the test of peace and the test of fighting in time of war . . . 90 per cent of the workers and the youth fell in the struggle with the dream of a Jewish Land of Israel before their eyes—the Land of Israel, of Ein Harod and Mishmar Ha'emek.⁴

In the first stages of the *briha*, its leaders and organizers were virtually all graduates of pioneering movements, and joined kibbutzim on their arrival in Palestine. As the operation grew, and the original leaders left for Palestine, their places were taken by men and women of different backgrounds, by emissaries from the Yishuv, and by the soldiers of the Jewish Brigade. None the less, more than half of these leaders and organizers of the *briha* who were of local origin were members of pioneering youth movements connected with the kibbutz, and about a third of the emissaries and soldiers from Palestine were themselves kibbutz members.⁵

The virtual dominance of the *briha* by people inspired by the kibbutz and its values had far-reaching effects. The groups in which the refugees were organized in the different stages of their journey were known as kibbutzim, and were run on a communal basis. An emphasis on the values of mutual aid and communal life seemed natural in the circumstances of suffering and deprivation which were part of the process of perpetual movement. But it is certainly not inconceivable that other, less egalitarian methods of organization could have been used—the exaction of payment for help and transport, social differentiation among the refugees, and so forth—and some attempts to introduce such methods were suppressed, sometimes forcibly, by the leaders of the *briha*.⁶ They believed that they were entrusted with implementing the values of the labour Zionist movement, particularly those of the kibbutz.

The pioneering elements were far from encompassing all the hundreds of thousands of Jews who took part in the *briha*. But, to give one instance from among many:

Among the masses of unorganized refugees [in an embarkation camp in northern Italy, under the aegis of the Jewish Brigade] the Hechalutz members were the

⁴ Quoted in Bauer, *Flight and Rescue*, 25.

⁵ *Ibid.* 29, 36.

⁶ *Ibid.* 118–20.

most active element, and invaluable in promoting social cohesion. . . . Many of the ordinary people were afraid of the sea journey, particularly after [the British began sending refugee boats to] Cyprus. The youth and pioneer groups, without fear or hesitation, would march proudly out of the temporary camp with a song on their lips. The sight of them encouraged the others, and gave them courage to carry on despite their suffering.⁷

The *briha* and the massive immigration which was an essential part of it were not only a tremendous effort to resettle the Jews of Europe. They were also an instrument of Zionist policy. In March 1945, on a British initiative, the Arab League was formed. This was, in effect, a formal declaration that the pre-war (and, for the most part, the wartime) policy of basing British influence in the Middle East on the support of the Arab governments was to continue. The accession of the Labour government to power in July 1945 brought no essential change: the policy of Ernest Bevin, Labour's foreign secretary, was the continuation of the 1939 White Paper, with its restrictions on Jewish land purchase and immigration, and its final perspective of an independent Arab state within a Middle Eastern alliance or confederation under British influence.

The successive waves of illegal immigration which began even before the end of the European war were, therefore, not only the result of the solidarity and sympathy of the Jews of Palestine with their homeless brethren. They were also intended to lead to the breakdown of British policy under the physical, administrative, and political pressures engendered by the constant arrival of boatloads of immigrants. On this issue there was virtually complete consensus throughout the Yishuv.

The organization of the voyages from the harbours of Europe to the shores of Palestine was the responsibility of the Mossad, and was integrated with its activity in organizing and supplying the people of the *briha* on their overland journey. The immigrants were accompanied by special teams, some of them members of the maritime division of the Palmach ('Palyam'), established in 1944, others responsible for the welfare and discipline of the travellers. If they managed to evade the British coastal patrols, they were helped to land by units of the Palmach, often aided by civilian volunteers. Their first night in the country was usually spent in one of the nearby kibbutzim, until they could safely be dispersed without the knowledge of the British authorities.

Thus, both politically and in terms of organization and personnel, the kibbutz movement and national organizations connected with it were prominent in this most central of activities from 1945 to 1948. The

⁷ Dinur, *Hagana*, iii. 1025.

individual immigrant, even if he or she was not a member of a youth movement or kibbutz-oriented group, would be guided through Europe by the agents of the Mossad, transported to Palestine on Mossad-owned ships under the control of the Palmach, helped on landing by special forces, and sheltered in a kibbutz on arrival. Kibbutz members were prominent in the Mossad at all levels, and the ethos of the Palmach was strongly kibbutz-oriented.

This component in the life of the refugees is emphasized in accounts of the detention camps in Cyprus, where most of the immigrant boats were taken from 1946 to 1948. There, some 90 per cent of the detainees were organized in 'kibbutzim', according to their ideological choice. In the words of one historian:

For many of the detainees joining a kibbutz was no more than a formal act, and when they arrived in Palestine they did not join a kibbutz, or even necessarily the movement which they had belonged to on the way there. But the very fact that they joined up with a nucleus of people imbued with Zionist and pioneering ideals strengthened them psychologically, and prevented anarchy and dissipation [in the conditions of forced idleness in the camps].⁸

As a result of all this, the kibbutz movement continued to enjoy the admiration of the Yishuv as a whole. As in the tower and stockade period, it was widely seen to be promoting the central interests of the Yishuv, and embodying its most exalted values. It also gained more than prestige. Many of those who arrived in the country had no relatives or other connections in the Yishuv, and had made friends, and often formed their social and political outlook, in the 'kibbutzim' of the *briha*. It is not surprising, therefore, that a relatively high proportion of the new immigrants stayed in the kibbutzim after their arrival in the country. By the beginning of 1948 7.4 per cent of the population of the Yishuv lived in kibbutzim, and by the end of the year this had risen to 7.56 per cent—a higher proportion than ever before. It was a peak which was never to be reached again.⁹

One Couple's Odyssey

The experiences of a single couple, Asher and Haviva Aranyi, formerly of Budapest, later among the founders of kibbutz Beit Ha'emek, and now veteran members of the kibbutz, provide a vivid illustration of the

⁸ Dinur, *Hagana*, iii. 1778; and cf. *ibid.* 1169.

⁹ See Appendix 2 and Near, 'Workers' Settlement', table 17.

post-war immigration process.¹⁰ Both emphasize that they were no different from the hundreds of thousands who underwent similar experiences, not because they were particularly heroic, but because there was, in the phraseology of the time, no alternative.

Asher was born in 1924 and Haviva in 1928, both to upper-middle-class parents in Budapest. Asher had been a member of the Zionist youth movement, Habonim, in the early years of the war. In 1944, when it became clear that the Germans, with the help of the local pro-Nazi organizations, were intent on destroying the Jewish people, he joined a Jewish underground resistance movement. 'We knew we were going to die', he recalls, 'so we determined to save as many Jewish lives as we could.' Among other exploits he joined the local militia, relying on his 'Aryan' appearance, and put his official documents to good use in the work of forging identity papers, hiding and feeding those in danger, and helping them to cross the border to Romania. He was imprisoned twice, but managed to survive.

Haviva spent most of the period of the Nazi actions in a Swiss-owned house with diplomatic immunity. She had not previously belonged to a Zionist youth movement. Early in 1945 she joined a 'training group' of Dror-Habonim in Budapest, against the advice of her parents, who wanted her to complete her studies. 'I told them that I wasn't prepared to shake the hands of the murderers', she says, referring to the collaboration of the Hungarian people in Nazi persecution.

Soon she left for a training kibbutz, where she met Asher for the first time, 'although', as she recalls, 'I knew a lot about him already: there were plenty of stories about his activities during the war. He was quite a hero—but we all thought he'd been killed in prison, until he suddenly appeared.' They were married in the summer of 1945, but were separated from each other a good deal of the time, since by now they were both working in the youth movement, mainly organizing camps, rambles, and other activities for some of the many thousands of teenage orphans who had somehow survived the Holocaust. By now, there were a number of emissaries from the kibbutz movement in Palestine, but they were very much engaged in the organization of the *briha*, and had little time for the day-to-day work of the movement. Haviva recalls a lecture by one of the few who spoke fluent Hungarian, on a day in the life of a kibbutznik. The day began when the workers gathered in the dining-hall for bread and jam and a cup of tea: 'not a proper breakfast—that came a

¹⁰ This account is based on a series of interviews with them conducted by the author between May and Oct. 1994. The recordings are in the archives of kibbutz Beit Ha'emek.

few hours later'. This made a very deep impression on young people whose breakfast never consisted of more than tea, bread, and jam. And, indeed, Haviva recalls that for the first two years after the war food was a constant topic of conversation, though there was no longer a threat of starvation, and the means provided by the Joint in the training farms and by other movement activities were sufficient to ensure a reasonable standard.

In October 1946 the couple, accompanied by Asher's mother, left for the long journey to Palestine. Groups of pioneers who were thought to have the best chance of obtaining immigration certificates were sent to Italy. The Aranyis were sent to Germany with a group of orphan children, where they would be among the 100,000 refugees for whom, it was thought, the Americans would persuade the British to grant extra certificates. Under the auspices of the Joint they were housed in a Christian orphanage. After a short time Asher returned to Hungary to continue his work in the movement and try to speed up their journey; Haviva looked after the children and waited.

One of Haviva's chief memories of these years is of waiting—for orders to move, for trains (and, later, ships) to arrive or leave, for the powers that be to decide her fate (in Germany, Cyprus, and, on arrival in Palestine, in the detention camp at Athlit). 'You have no control over your fate, no knowledge—for nobody tells you the reason for the hold-up—and no desire or ability to do anything meaningful.'

At the end of 1945, in a particularly cold winter, Haviva decided to return to Hungary: there was neither post nor telephone, and she had had no news of Asher. Despite two false starts, during which she had to return because of bad weather, she made her way by train to the Hungarian border, and from there hitch-hiked to Budapest. Travelling in this direction was much harder than joining the general stream of the *briha* to Germany six months earlier. But she arrived in Budapest just in time to find Asher about to leave, with the news that they were shortly to join the stream of illegal immigrants making for Palestine. After yet another time-consuming and dangerous journey to fetch Asher's mother, they left with several hundred others in a cattle-car, which took them to a tiny harbour in a beautiful bay near Fiume, in Yugoslavia. For many of them—including the Aranyis—this was their first sight of the sea. But the beauty surrounding them contrasted strongly with the conditions of the ship in which they now found themselves, together with another 3,000 people. On each deck there were eight tiers of bunks, 60 centimetres broad, 180 centimetres high, and long enough for a middle-sized person.

Haviva, now in her fifth month of pregnancy, was given the privilege of sleeping—more exactly, living, for they were rarely allowed out into the upper decks—in the top bunk. During the journey, which lasted a month, they ate American K-rations, drank strictly rationed allocations of water, tried to learn Hebrew, played games—and waited.

On reaching Palestinian territorial waters they were intercepted, as they knew they would be, by British destroyers, and escorted to Haifa port. The British soldiers who came on board to transfer them to another ship were met by a barrage of tins from the store, together with any other object that came to hand. But tear-gas proved to be an effective weapon, and resistance was quickly brought to an end. Asher and Haviva jumped into the harbour, but were pulled out (Asher by his hair), and taken to Cyprus.

In the Cyprus camp the immigrants used their ingenuity to the full: tent material was used for clothing and bedding, tiles for sculpture, and tin cans, ammunition boxes, and the like for everything. The Aranyis returned to their previous work as youth leaders and teachers—keeping one lesson ahead in the Hebrew classes. Haviva gave birth to her first child, Naomi, in a Greek maternity hospital where she shared no common language with the staff. 'We had to discover everything for ourselves', she says; 'there was no older, more experienced generation to give us advice—and the same applied when we arrived in Beit Ha'emek.' Soon, however, volunteers from Palestine arrived, and they established children's houses modelled on those in the kibbutzim. For the men, there was plenty of time for sport and some rudimentary military training.

After months of waiting, Asher, Haviva, and Naomi travelled back to Palestine, and were subjected to a further waiting period in the detention camp at Atlit. Haviva remembers this episode, when she was so close to freedom but separated from her husband (men and women were in neighbouring camps), as one of the most frustrating times of the whole journey.

At last they were freed. On a December evening they stood in a Haifa street, with no money, knowing only that they had to reach M., where there was a group of graduates of the Hungarian Habonim movement waiting for settlement. Two of the members of this kibbutz had worked in the Cyprus camp, and the Aranyis were expecting to be joined there by a group with which they had lived as a 'kibbutz' in Cyprus. With the help of sympathetic strangers they took a bus to a nearby reception camp, and the next morning found their way to the offices of the Jewish Agency, where they were given a bus ticket to M.

They still remember what they felt to be their casual reception by the members of M. as indicative of the failure of the more settled kibbutzim to devote sufficient time and thought to the absorption of new immigrants. They had notified the kibbutz of their coming, but they found the man who was to have greeted them on the bus, shrugging off their confusion as of no account. 'They made every possible mistake in absorbing us.' The conditions were hard: their room, barely big enough to hold a bed and a chair, was one of eight in a wooden hut whose walls were so thin that 'you could hear someone drinking coffee in the room at the other end'. Haviva worked in the vegetable garden, picking cucumbers and tomatoes, from 6 a.m. until 4 p.m.—lunch was eaten in the field; the heat was oppressive, particularly for those not yet used to the climate. But all this was less important than the fact that they had to work in shifts which meant that on most weekdays they met during the day only at the bus station; for Asher, thanks to his electrical skills and knowledge of languages, was given the job of showing films in the kibbutzim of the area (and trying to synchronize the Hebrew translation with the English original—two languages in which he was far from fluent). They also suffered from social isolation: although the members of M. were from a similar background, they were of a different generation, and constituted a very close-knit group, most of them being from the same town and many from the same family.

During the War of Independence Asher fought in a unit recruited from all the settlements in the Jordan valley. He survived the war unscathed, but four of his comrades, members of the group which eventually founded Beit Ha'emek, were killed. Haviva was evacuated to Haifa with the children and most of the women of M. They lived in tents on the lawn of a guest-house on the Carmel (the house itself being full of evacuees), and did their best to maintain a normal and active life for the children.

Haviva was impressed by the contrast between the relatively luxurious and stable life around her, in a middle-class suburb of Haifa not very different from that in which she had grown up, and the harsh life of the kibbutz. This made it doubly hard to return to M., with its demanding physical work and social difficulties. The original group was of a very high intellectual standard: several of its members have become distinguished academics, and with the end of the war a good many left in order to study. This was very deeply resented, and their 'treachery' much discussed. It made the Aranyis' social difficulties even more acute.

Those to whom they had been closest, in Hungary and Cyprus, were

now in two separate groups—one still in Cyprus, the other in a kibbutz in the north. Eventually these two groups united. Asher and Haviva, who formed a link between the two and were able to strengthen their leadership, were asked to join them. After a short period at kibbutz Kinneret to consolidate the united group, they reached their new home at the end of January 1949.

The Briha and the Politics of the Movements

In the early post-war period the leaders of the *briha*, who had fought in the ghettos and the partisan forces together with other Jews of all political views, attempted to create a united non-party movement deriving its momentum and moral force from this common experience. They even discussed the possibility that such a movement would bring about the unity of the kibbutz movements and the labour parties in the Yishuv. The members of the Jewish Brigade also worked in an all-movement framework. But from a very early stage the European pioneers renewed their contact with the Yishuv and its leaders, and were directly influenced by the political situation in the kibbutz movements. In June 1945 Meir Ya'ari met some of the leaders of the *briha* and was shocked to see that they had been 'tempted' to join with ex-partisans from other kibbutz movements to create a united political front. In the long heart-to-heart talks traditional to the youth movements he persuaded them to abandon these heretical tendencies. Similarly, when it became clear that the parent movements would fight to retain their own interests and organizational framework, Zuckerman, who had been one of the most enthusiastic advocates of movement unity, remained loyal to the Kibbutz Me'uhad, while privately expressing his bitter disillusionment.¹¹

Despite the emotional and ideological force of their vision of unity, all the local leaders eventually toed the line laid down by the parent movements in the Yishuv. It became clear that the memories and loyalties on which the ghetto fighters had nurtured their dreams were not merely generalized ideas of the Yishuv and the kibbutz. Loyalty to the Zionist movement also meant loyalty to a particular movement within it. In Zuckerman's words, some dreamt of Ein Harod, others of Mishmar Ha'emek.

In this respect, the record of the Kibbutz Me'uhad is somewhat ambiguous. Contact between the representatives of this movement and the survivors of the Holocaust began in the period when its leaders still

¹¹ Kanari, *Hakibbutz Hameuchad*, 271-5.

half believed in the possibility that they would return to Mapai, and were deeply hurt by the fact that the leaders of the party treated them as political opponents. But they were not prepared to give in on matters which they considered cardinal to their views and interests. At the Histadrut conference in November 1944 Mapai suggested transferring control of the youth movements from the Histadrut to the Jewish Agency. This would have put the financial and political support for movements of every complexion in the hands of one organizational framework largely—and not coincidentally—controlled by Mapai. Both the Kibbutz Me'uhad and the Kibbutz Artzi opposed the proposal, on the grounds that it would weaken the working-class character of the youth movements and endanger the allocation of money and manpower to their own organizations.

On the other hand, the Kibbutz Me'uhad did not hasten to set up its own separate framework for work in Europe, but instead attempted to co-operate with the broader movement set up by the ex-partisans. The attempt was bound to fail. The reborn youth movements were largely controlled and directed by emissaries who came fresh from a recently divided labour movement; and for the independent movements such as Gordonia, Hashomer Hatzair, and Hanoar Hatzioni the attempt to create a united movement smacked strongly of a return to the pre-war doctrine of 'comprehensiveness', and the dominance of the Kibbutz Me'uhad.¹² Between 1944 and 1946 the Kibbutz Me'uhad sent 162 emissaries to Europe. This was a huge number, compared either with its thirty-four emissaries in Europe in 1939 or with those sent by the other movements.¹³ It should be emphasized that these men and women came from both political camps in the movement, and engaged in a wide variety of activities, from social work in the refugee camps, organization of convoys and camps, defence work, and the like to educational work in the youth movements. The main theme of their mission was certainly not ideological separatism. But there is no doubt that, in the atmosphere of the time, the message came through.

The Kibbutz Me'uhad's reluctance to operate in an independent framework meant that it at first lagged behind its rivals in the competition for recruits. But its massive injection of educational forces, backed by the establishment of special seminars for emissaries and youth leaders, enabled it to overtake them. The immigration figures for the years of the *briha* show that it took about a year to do so: of 6,409 immigrants who reached the kibbutzim between May 1945 and January 1947, half joined

¹² See *KM* i. 129–30, 210.

¹³ Kanari, *Hakibbutz Hameuchad*, 268–9.

the Kibbutz Me'uhad, 27 per cent the Kibbutz Artzi, and 23 per cent Hever Hakvutzot.¹⁴ Even though it was deeply divided politically, the Kibbutz Me'uhad's far-reaching conception of its social and national mission kept it at the forefront of the kibbutz movement.

REVOLT AND REACTION: THE STRUGGLE

The events described above formed part of an extremely complex and volatile political and military situation, the key to which was the struggle between the Yishuv (and the Zionist movement) and the Mandatory power. In Zionist historiography this period is known as the struggle (*hama'avak*). Many of its further developments were catalysed by the existence of two military groups outside the Hagana and the official Zionist movement.

From 1944 onwards the IZL and the Lehi had been waging a sporadic urban guerrilla campaign against the British administration, to the extreme displeasure of the Zionist leadership, and particularly the labour movement. During the latter years of the war, the Hagana had made a number of unsuccessful attempts to form an alliance with these two dissident organizations, or to coerce them to accept the policy of the official Zionist movement. One of the most dramatic of these was the incident known as the *saison*, which took place after the assassination of Lord Moyne in 1944. Rather than co-operate with the British police in the fight against the IZL and the Lehi, the Palmach took on itself the task of imprisoning and interrogating their leaders. Although operationally successful, this action caused much soul-searching in the labour movement: for instance, it was carried out only by volunteers within the Palmach; those opposed to armed struggle between Jews took no part in it. And it was a complete failure as an attempt to eliminate the minority forces, which continued to gain strength as British policy aroused increasing animosity in the Yishuv.¹⁵

By the summer of 1945 it had become clear that the British government was prepared to use repressive measures in order to restrict immigration and prevent the fulfilment of Zionist aims. Under these circumstances, the traditional Zionist policy of diplomatic pressure coupled with agricultural settlement and illegal immigration seemed ineffectual—if only because there was a great deal of pressure for

¹⁴ Tsur, *Settlement*, 248.

¹⁵ Shavit, *Open Season*; Bauer, *Diplomacy*, 332-3.

stronger measures, both from the general public and from the ranks of the Hagana. In October 1945 the Hagana reached an agreement with the dissident organizations. For some nine months, their actions against the British were co-ordinated within a framework known as the Jewish Revolt Movement (Tnu'at Hameri Ha'ivri). Its policy was to undertake a series of demonstrative military actions against the British army and civil administration, thereby proving that repression of the Jews would be more expensive than negotiation with them. These actions, which were planned to lead to as little loss of life as possible on both sides, included the 'night of the trains' (November 1945), which involved sabotage of the railway services in all parts of Palestine, and the 'night of the bridges' (June 1946), in which eleven bridges connecting Mandatory Palestine with the neighbouring countries were blown up.

The reaction of the British authorities to these events was swift and drastic. Using emergency regulations adopted at the time of the Arab revolt, the army and police conducted searches without warrant and arrests in an attempt to identify, isolate, and punish the members of all the military formations and their political leaders.¹⁶

The co-operation between the Hagana and the dissident groups came to an end in July 1946 with the blowing up of the King David hotel in Jerusalem by the IZL, in which more than eighty people were killed.¹⁷ From now on, clashes between the dissident groups and British troops became increasingly violent and brutal, while the official Zionist movement emphasized that its reply to British policy did not depend on violence, but on constructive actions: namely, the intensification of immigration and settlement.

Since the Palmach and the Hagana were so intimately connected with the kibbutzim, it was natural that many of them should be directly affected by these actions. In February 1946 the British army discovered a cache of weapons and written material showing that Birya, a newly settled kibbutz just outside Safed (an 'outpost' of the religious section of the Palmach) was connected with the Hagana.¹⁸ As a result, all of its twenty-four inhabitants were arrested, and the site occupied by the army. Neither the Hagana nor the kibbutz movement could accept this act without responding, for it struck at the heart of their two most sacred

¹⁶ Dinur, *Hagana*, iii. 891-6, 904-5.

¹⁷ This action was planned jointly by the Hagana and the IZL, but the Hagana apparently withdrew its agreement, and was subsequently highly critical of the loss of life involved. Dinur, *Hagana*, iii. 898-901.

¹⁸ The description of the Birya incident, including the quotation below, is taken from Dinur, *Hagana*, iii. 871-4.

objectives: agricultural settlement and self-defence. Two weeks later more than 2,000 members of all the pioneering youth movements made their way to Birya, under the guise of their annual pilgrimage to the grave of Joseph Trumpeldor at Tel Hai. They raised new buildings and planted trees and flowers at a spot close to the occupied site. When the mass demonstration had left, the army again evacuated the 150 people guarding the site, and destroyed the fruit of their labours. In reply, the Hagana, reinforced by volunteers from Safed and the whole of Upper Galilee, organized another reoccupation. After further negotiations, twenty occupants were allowed to stay on the spot and rebuild the kibbutz.

I have described this incident in detail as it is a paradigm of the actions of the Palmach and the Hagana, and of their interaction with the kibbutz movement and the public. The work of the Palmach was, in general, carried out under conditions of secrecy. Every kibbutz had its arms cache, and many of the Hagana's central stores and workshops were located in the kibbutzim. When these facts were revealed, those taken by the army offered passive resistance, but asserted their right to self-defence. At the trial of the men of Birya the local commander said:

These weapons are purely defensive. Not far from our settlement, one village [Ein Zeitim] has twice been destroyed, its inhabitants murdered and burnt alive. We have decided to defend our lives, and the lives of our children. . . . We cannot and will not give up the right to defend ourselves, even if the law forbids it. . . . All we want is work, construction, and peace.

While not accepted by the judges, who sentenced the accused to imprisonment for periods of between one and four years, these arguments formed the ideological basis of the work of the Palmach, and were accepted by the wider community as expressing the aspirations of the whole Yishuv. The people of Safed, traditionally a 'holy city' whose Jews occupied themselves with study and holy living, turned out to support the besieged settlement, and its rabbi even permitted the baking of bread on the Sabbath to feed the defenders. In accordance with the policy of the Hagana, the eventual purpose was not to defeat the British army, nor to escalate the military conflict, but to negotiate from a position of relative strength. It seems that the Mandatory authorities concluded from the Birya incident that the cost of such operations was too high. They never again tried to prevent the establishment of new Jewish settlements, even in areas in which the purchase of land by Jews was officially forbidden.

None the less, the Jewish revolt did in fact lead to an escalation of the

conflict. The British army was not prepared to accept the blatant challenge to its authority exemplified by such actions as the King David incident, and was determined to prove that the Hagana was controlled by the central Zionist authorities. On 26 June 1946 there took place the action known in Zionist history as the Black Sabbath. Almost all the Zionist leaders, with the fortuitous exception of Ben-Gurion and Moshe Sneh, the civilian commander of the Hagana, were arrested, together with many thousands of other suspects. At the same time, searches were made in twenty-three kibbutzim and four moshavim, with the double purpose of identifying Palmach members and revealing arms caches. The first of these objectives was achieved only to a very limited degree, since the kibbutz members refused to co-operate in the identification parades. Although there were arms caches in all the kibbutzim, they were found only in Yagur. There, the discovery of one cache led to the arrest and questioning of virtually all the male inhabitants, as well as further intensive searches which uncovered thirty-two hiding-places and considerable quantities of arms, and did extensive damage to the buildings and fields of the kibbutz.

In the course of these searches, and others which followed a short time later, three people were killed, and a great deal of economic damage done to the kibbutzim: since the population refused to co-operate in the process of identifying the Palmach members, most of the men apparently of military age in these kibbutzim—more than 2,700 people—were imprisoned, many for as long as two months.

Something of the members' reactions to these events can be seen in the following extracts from the daily newsletter of Giv'at Brenner:

1 July 1946

Our greetings to Yagur, which is being destroyed by an army incited to anti-semitism and the commission of atrocities by its leaders, who renege on their own promises and deny the principles of justice, while they themselves claim to be defenders of law and order, and the founders of a new social order¹⁹ . . .

7 July 1946

We have been given the chance to taste something of the flavour of Auschwitz—a very tangible lesson, so that we can better understand the fate of our slaughtered millions . . . we have learnt what it is to be a people in prison.

We used to ask ourselves 'How was it that the Jewish masses agreed to march at the behest of their torturers, who ordered this one to turn left and that one right, condemned one to the tortures of death and the other to the tortures of

¹⁹ This is, of course, a reference to the fact that the anti-Zionist policy was being conducted by the British Labour government.

life? How did the masses allow themselves to be shut in behind barbed wire fences, without attempting to break out? . . . We shall wonder no more . . . The comparison is frightful: here it was only a few hours, the search was over, and we were freed. . . . But who knows whether the Jews of Poland also thought that it was only for a few hours?

When the truck took some of our 'criminals' off to an unknown destination, there was a moment of mass protest. Everyone pressed up against the fence, shouted, even threatened. Reason won out: the demonstration quietened down by itself, people formed up in some sort of order and began to sing together . . . Was our song a pale and bloodless substitute for a revolt? Or a song of encouragement to those who were being abducted from our midst? Or was it meant to spite our oppressors, and show them that our spirit was not broken? May I be forgiven if I say that in our song there was also an echo of the voices of those who were taken off to the gallows at Treblinka.

From mid-1946 until the appointment of the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine in May 1947 the Zionist movement continued to pursue its twofold aim: to define the future map of Jewish Palestine by constant settlement; and to increase the rate of illegal immigration to the point where the British government, under constant pressure from world opinion, would no longer be able to contain it. These actions were supported by the Hagana, particularly the Palmach, and met the approval of the great majority of the Yishuv; and the kibbutz movements played a major part in putting them into practice. But other questions, some of which had been on the Zionist agenda for many years, were the subject of active, sometimes violent, controversy. Several of them cut across party lines and, no less, divided the kibbutz movements.

The Struggle: Political Aspects

Ever since the pre-war discussion on attitudes to British policy, the Zionist movement had been divided into two groups, known as 'activists' and 'moderates'. These were not formal factions or parties, but rather the expression of basic attitudes which often existed side by side within the same party. This division returned with redoubled force and importance after the war, and vitally affected the Zionist movement's responses to British policies. At the extreme end of the moderate spectrum was the Ihud group, headed by Judah Magnes and Martin Buber, which advocated Arab-Jewish co-operation, even to the point of limiting Jewish immigration. The most radical activists were the dissident military groups with their Revisionist political supporters, now returned to the Zionist movement. Between these extremes were several shades of opinion,

some represented by particular political parties, some by small groups or individuals within the major parties. The struggle between Weizmann and Ben-Gurion, which had been a major feature of Zionist politics since the early 1940s, was to a large degree the result of Weizmann's moderation and Ben-Gurion's activism.²⁰

These two tendencies were also to be found within the kibbutz movements and the political groupings attached to them. The Kibbutz Me'uhad was well known for its activist attitude; in the view of its leaders, the emphasis on the right and duty of the kibbutz to defend itself, and the Yishuv in general, was combined with a very basic distrust of the British and their intentions. When L'ahdut Ha'avoda was established as an independent party in 1944, it adopted an activist stance as a matter of course. Hashomer Hatzair, on the other hand, was known as a moderate element in Zionist politics. Its pacific tendencies stemmed from two sources: the influence of A. D. Gordon and Martin Buber, both of them opponents of the use of violence; and the movement's emphasis on the need to reach an understanding with the Arabs, which at this period was expressed in its advocacy of a binational state. As for Hever Hakvutzot, though the movement as such had no special line on this issue, most of its members were influenced by the moderate ideological tradition stemming from Gordon and the Hapoel Hatzair party.²¹

Within the Hagana this division took the form of a discussion on the best way to combat British policy: through a 'linked struggle' in which armed strength should be used only to support constructive actions such as the transport, landing, and distribution of immigrants and the defence of Jewish settlements, or a 'continuous struggle', whereby a series of actions like the 'night of the trains' would convince the Mandatory power that negotiation with the Yishuv would be less expensive in military terms than continued repression. During the period of co-operation with the dissident military groups, Hashomer Hatzair's representative on the committee which controlled the Jewish Revolt Movement was almost alone in his opposition to 'unlinked' actions. But Hashomer Hatzair was not alone in the Zionist movement. In the spring of 1946 a group of Mapai members, almost all of them originally leaders of the Hapoel Hatzair party, published a pamphlet expressing their deep concern about the increasing and, in their view, unjustified violence of the Hagana and its more extreme allies. The signatories included a number of prominent members of Hever Hakvutzot.²²

²⁰ Gorni, *Partnership and Conflict*.

²¹ Dinur, *Hagana*, vol. iii, ch. 45.

²² *Ibid.* 944-6.

After the King David episode the Zionist movement, under pressure from Weizmann, adopted a clear policy of 'linked struggle', which continued until the beginning of the War of Independence.

Towards Partition

Ben-Gurion was an activist by temperament and, in this respect, enjoyed the support of the Kibbutz Me'uhad even after the majority of that movement had left his party and formed L'ahdut Ha'avoda. But this support did not extend to his aspiration to establish an independent Jewish state, even if this meant the partition of Palestine. In this, the tacit agreement between the Kibbutz Me'uhad and its urban allies, whereby the latter supported Tabenkin's anti-partitionist views while the Kibbutz Me'uhad opposed the dominance of Mapai in the Histadrut, was strictly observed.

By the time the activist front broke up in the summer of 1946, when Zionist policy was in the melting-pot, both the Kibbutz Artzi and the Kibbutz Me'uhad had completed the process of politicization, and each controlled an organized political party with a well-defined ideology: the Hashomer Hatzair party, founded in February 1946, and Ahdut Ha'avoda, founded in April 1946. Although these two new parties differed profoundly on the issue of activism, as well as in their vision of a desirable political regime in Palestine, they had a number of elements in common. They shared the constructivist approach of the vast majority of the labour movement, and commanded much sympathy for their part in the *briha*, the Palmach, and the expansion of Zionist settlement. The ideologists of both parties used Marxist terminology, and expressed sympathy for the Soviet Union both as a socialist state and for its part in the victory over Nazism. And, despite their differences in matters of Zionist policy, they were both firmly opposed to that of Mapai.

For by now the cat was out of the bag. The Biltmore Programme had called for a Jewish commonwealth in all of Palestine. No realistic view of post-war developments could have considered this a practical possibility, though Ben-Gurion and his allies had consistently denied that their policy would lead to partition of the country. But in July 1946 the British published the Morrison-Grady plan, which provided for the cantonization of the country with boundaries most unfavourable to the Jews. In August the Jewish Agency's executive committee reacted by demanding a 'viable Jewish state in a suitable part of Palestine'. This was the first time that official Zionist policy had accepted the principle of partition.

In October the Jewish Agency executive announced a cessation of Hagana action, and declared the Zionist movement's opposition to terrorist tactics. These events aroused indignation among the activist wing, and Moshe Sneh, until then the civilian head of the Hagana, resigned, allying himself with the activist opposition. But they served the purpose of enabling the British government to free the leaders of the Zionist movement, imprisoned since June of that year. Consequently the Zionist Congress which met in Basle in December 1946 had a full complement of leaders, and a fateful agenda.

The elections to the Congress give an indication of the state of opinion in the Yishuv. Mapai received a plurality of 37.5 per cent, the Revisionists 14 per cent, and Ahdut Ha'avoda and Hashomer Hatzair 12.5 per cent each. There was clearly a widespread desire for strong action against the British, but no absolute majority on the partition issue. At the congress itself, Weizmann's non-election to the presidency was regarded as symbolizing the rejection of unquestioning co-operation with Britain. In effect, however, the congress authorized the new executive to negotiate on the basis of partition.

From this point on the situation in Palestine deteriorated, with the dissident organizations engaging in continuous guerrilla warfare with the British in a process of increasing brutality on both sides. The Hagana was unable—even if it was willing—to control the situation. The Zionist executive, with the help of the Mossad, continued to organize and encourage massive immigration, culminating in the summer of 1947 with the voyage of the *Exodus 1947*, which the British returned to France and then to Germany, incurring much censure in world public opinion. Meanwhile, in February 1947 Bevin announced the decision to refer the Palestine question to the United Nations, thus putting into motion the process which culminated in the UN decision of 29 November to establish a Jewish and an Arab state in Palestine.

These happenings vitally affected the political situation of the kibbutz movements. The two kibbutz parties had emerged as powerful oppositionist elements within the labour movement, but they were far from being able to overthrow the leadership of Mapai. The elections to the Zionist Congress made it clear that they were unable to make a mass appeal within the Yishuv, and that their support in the World Zionist Movement was proportionately even smaller.

Though these two parties were deeply divided in their view of the long-term solution to the Palestine problem, by 1946 they were in agreement on a short-term programme: since there was no realistic prospect

either of a binational solution or of an undivided Jewish state in the near future, for the time being Palestine should remain under external control. The British had shown themselves so hostile that they could no longer be trusted with the mandate; it should therefore be replaced by a trusteeship of the United Nations.²³ This view was not accepted by the Jews, by the Arabs, or by any international body. As the momentum of events led towards the UN decision, the Yishuv's approval of the idea of statehood—ranging from acceptance to enthusiasm—became more marked, and the political wings of the kibbutz movements found themselves increasingly isolated.

Even in matters of security, an area in which the kibbutz movements seemed to be part of an overall consensus within the labour movement, they had shown themselves at odds with the leadership. Hashomer Hatzair all along proclaimed moderate views, in opposition to the activism of Ben-Gurion and the leaders of the Hagana. And in the summer of 1946, at the very moment when Ben-Gurion was trying to steer a middle course between the extremism of the dissident groups and their political allies and his own hesitant political partners, he and the Zionist leadership were attacked forcefully by Ahdut Ha'avoda and the leaders of the Kibbutz Me'uhad on the grounds that they displayed vacillation and weakness in the face of British intransigence. Such attitudes and incidents left a bitter residue which would return to plague their inventors in the fierce political struggles which followed the establishment of the state.²⁴

The leaders of the Kibbutz Artzi were convinced that the Soviet Union was edging towards a recognition of Zionism. Some of their representatives in the United States invested much time and energy in conversations with Russian diplomats, and believed that these played a part in the Soviet declaration of support for a binational solution or, failing that, for partition. By the time of the favourable vote on partition in the UN Assembly (November 1947) Hashomer Hatzair and several of the leaders of Ahdut Ha'avoda had accepted the idea of the truncated Jewish state. But Tabenkin and his most devoted followers still viewed it with deep suspicion.²⁵

As in the rest of the Yishuv, the whole range of Zionist policy was hotly debated in the kibbutzim, both informally and within the decision-making bodies of the movements. However, the forces which had crystallized in previous controversies remained more or less unchanged.

²³ Zait, 'Unification of the Left', 41-3.

²⁴ Zait, *Pioneers*, 217-26.

²⁵ Zait, 'Unification of the Left', 44-7.

Hashomer Hatzair, true to the doctrine of ideological collectivism, remained monolithically loyal to the concept of the binational state, but acquiesced in the creation of the state. Hever Hakvutzot, despite the anti-activist views of many of its leaders, followed Ben-Gurion and the Mapai majority. And the Kibbutz Me'uhad was split according to its members' party loyalties: two-thirds supported Ahdut Ha'avoda, with its very deep reservations about partition, while the rest favoured Mapai.

The divisions within the Kibbutz Me'uhad reached far beyond the actions of their representatives in the Zionist movement and the Histadrut: they were felt in the everyday discussions and actions within the kibbutzim, many of them deeply divided politically. In kibbutz Beit Hashita:

The climax of it all was perhaps on the night of 27 November 1947. Being in charge of our cultural committee, I was listening to our sole radio. At midnight, with tremendous excitement, I heard the final UN vote and decision. I ran out, planning to ring the bell, and to wake everybody up in order to share the news and celebrate. Near the bell I met some members.

'What are you going to do?' they asked.

I told them.

'Who told you to ring the bell? Did the assembly decide, did the secretariat decide? No, you won't ring it, no way.'

It was a very intense encounter, and I felt that I had to give in, or else I'd be physically prevented from ringing the bell. In the morning, I took flags out and was on my way to hang them on our public buildings and the kibbutz centre, when I was stopped again.

'Where are you going?'

'To hang these flags out, just like everyone else in the country.'

'No you won't. First let's call the secretariat and make a decision.'

Again I submitted, but after breakfast I called for a special meeting of our cultural committee. I said, 'Last night, while the whole country was joyfully celebrating, we didn't do a thing. We can't ignore what's happening—let's plan something for this evening.' I suggested a party; it was immediately voted down. Being in the minority, I suggested a general meeting for a discussion of the events instead, and demanded that the dining-hall be decorated with white tablecloths and flowers. 'Absolutely not!' was the reaction. 'We'll never forgive ourselves for letting this historic occasion pass in such a manner', I said.

And the famous reaction to this was: 'If a woman has a miscarriage, does she celebrate the event?'

I argued, but failed to convince them, and I finally withdrew. Others took over, and a little note was put on the bulletin board: 'Tonight—a meeting to

discuss the current events.' That was the exact wording. . . . A huge audience gathered, nevertheless—adults, adolescents, and children. The speakers opened by lamenting the event. Yehuda said in his speech: 'I was in Haifa today, and I saw the masses going wild in the streets, and I'm sure some blood has already been shed in this great commotion, for this fantasy of a state.' People continued in this vein until someone jumped up and yelled: 'Gewalt! We want to celebrate and you want us to weep!' A dead silence followed. I didn't know what would happen next, the air was so tense. In the corner, however, a single member got up and started to sing the national anthem, *Hatikva*. Gradually the whole audience joined in, and then tables were moved out of the way and a *hora* was started and swept everyone in.²⁶

Hashomer Hatzair and Ahdut Ha'avoda were partly reconciled to the United Nations decision by the fact that the Soviet Union's support for the resolution had been a decisive factor in its acceptance: thus their admiration for Communism no longer seemed to clash with their Zionism. Neither the positive Zionist aims in their respective platforms nor their differences on the way to conduct the struggle against the British were relevant to the new circumstances. They were consequently able to agree on a common platform based on 'Zionism of the left', and at the beginning of January 1948 the Hashomer Hatzair party united with Ahdut Ha'avoda to found a new party, Mapam (an acronym of Mifleget Hapo'alim Hame'uهدet: the United Workers' Party).

The timing of this act was connected with the forthcoming elections to the Constituent Assembly (shortly afterwards to become the First Knesset), which took place at the end of the month. The results of the elections were: Mapai 34 per cent; Mapam 14.5 per cent; religious bloc 12 per cent; Herut (Revisionists) 11 per cent; General Zionists (centre right) 5 per cent; Progressives (centre left) 4 per cent.²⁷ The two kibbutz-led parties had together created a new political force which proved to be the most powerful opposition bloc in the infant state. It is no wonder that Ben-Gurion, who saw unity under his personal leadership as one of the prerequisites for victory in the war and the development of the state, viewed them with deep suspicion.

²⁶ Reminiscences of Avraham Aderet in an interview with Amia Lieblich: Lieblich, *Kibbutz Makom*, 131–2; 'Gewalt!': an expression of dismay. In another reminiscence of this period Aderet quotes Yosske Rabinovitch, one of the leading ideologists of the Kibbutz Me'uhad, as saying on 15 May 1948: 'the best that can happen is that we [the Palmach] shall go even deeper underground.' Magen, 'Sixty Years', 107.

²⁷ *Israel Government Yearbook*, 1950/1, 7–8. The remaining votes went mainly to various sectoral lists.

ECONOMICS AND SETTLEMENT, 1945-1948

Economics

Several factors combined to make the transition of the Palestinian economy from war to peace conditions relatively smooth. Although the bulk of the British forces left the Middle Eastern zone, the Jewish struggle against the British government's policy led to the concentration of an increasing number of troops in Palestine itself, thus stimulating the local economy. Immigration was resumed, though more slowly than during the boom years between the wars. The local economy was now open to imports from abroad, but the markets of Europe and the US were far from being saturated after wartime scarcity, and there was no problem of dumping. Thus, the years between the Second World War and the War of Independence were a time of moderate prosperity, with a gradual rise in production and standards of living.²⁸

The kibbutzim shared in these developments. The experience gained over the preceding years led to a steady increase in yields and efficiency. From 1945 onwards the import of tractors and other heavy agricultural equipment was resumed, though restricted by government allocations. Productivity was also enhanced in the wake of a study tour in the United States by experts from the agricultural sector: improvements in methods of poultry-raising, the introduction of new types of fertilizer and weed-killer, more efficient use of agricultural machinery, and many other changes amounted to something close to a technical revolution.²⁹ The process of industrialization continued: by the beginning of 1947 more than 60 per cent of those engaged in productive work in the Kibbutz Me'uhad, and 43 per cent in the Kibbutz Artzi, worked in non-agricultural branches.³⁰ By the end of 1946 most of the soldiers had returned home, and those who were still mobilized in the Palmach worked in the kibbutzim, thus helping to bring the manpower situation back to a more normal state.

As against these positive factors, there were setbacks in the agricultural branches. Outbreaks of Newcastle disease and foot-and-mouth disease in 1946 reduced yields in the poultry and dairy branches, and in 1947 there was a drought of unprecedented severity. World scarcity of raw materials, including seeds and fertilizers, affected the profitability of agriculture, and the local market was open to the import of cheap fruit, vegetables, and dairy products from the neighbouring countries.³¹

²⁸ Halevi, *Economic Development*, 48-9.

²⁹ Gvati, *A Century of Settlement*, i, 338-9.

³⁰ *UAW Report* (1949), 63-4, 71-2.

³¹ *Ibid.* 59-61.

Despite these setbacks, the overall result was a steady improvement of the economic and financial situation of the kibbutzim. By 1947, the value of their total property had increased by 42 per cent in real terms.³² On the other hand, although much of this improvement, particularly in the younger kibbutzim, was the result of long-term financing by official bodies, the pressure to invest both in capital goods and in social requirements such as housing, in order to accommodate ex-servicemen and new immigrants, had led to an increase in short-term debts, with much higher interest rates; these amounted to 33 per cent of the kibbutz movement's total obligations at the end of 1946.³³

This was the continuation of a trend mentioned in Chapter 3: the combination of economic consolidation with financial deterioration. It could have spelt disaster for the kibbutz movement. The rate of interest was rising, and a debt of this magnitude could well have led to a vicious spiral of increasing indebtedness.³⁴ As we have seen, projects for the recycling of these debts were already being discussed. In 1947 these plans began to be realized: £P470,000 was allocated for this purpose to seventy-five kibbutzim and moshavim. This came partly from Zionist funds, which had increased greatly over the past two years, and partly from a number of the Histadrut's economic organs such as Bank Hapoalim, and the co-operative marketing organizations (Tnuva and Hamashbir), which had flourished in the period of prosperity and were now able to advance loans at relatively favourable rates. Other sources of finance for this and other purposes were institutions such as PASA (the Palestine Agricultural Settlement Association), founded in 1936 at the initiative of the Foundation Fund, as an instrument for involving private capital in the development of agricultural settlement. The capital was provided partly by the Foundation Fund, and partly by private finance.³⁵ In this way, the principle that settlement should be directed and financed by public bodies was preserved; but the ever-increasing needs of the kibbutzim were partly satisfied by the partnership with private investors.

One result of these developments was a marked, though still modest, rise in the standard of living. The nutritional standards of the kibbutzim, which had been significantly reduced during the 1937-42 economic crisis, had returned to their pre-slump level by 1946.³⁶ In addition a

³² *UAW Report* (1945), 91-8; *UAW Report* (1949), 115-20. For rates of inflation, see Shatil, *Economy*, 377.

³³ *UAW Report* (1945), 70-1.

³⁴ Horovitz, *Palestinian Economy*, 266.

³⁵ Ulitzur, *National Capital*, 55-61.

³⁶ *UAW Report* (1945), 56-7; *UAW Report* (1949), 55.

major effort to improve housing had begun in 1942: according to a report published in 1944, roughly half of the kibbutzim's dwellings had been built during the war. A year later another report stated that 'thousands of kibbutz members are still living in dilapidated huts, tents, temporary shelters, old packing-cases and the like'. The situation had improved greatly since the mid-1930s, and continued to do so: by 1948 the 'primus'³⁷ no longer existed, for example. But conditions were still far from luxurious: the standard room for a veteran couple measured 12 square metres, with no shower or lavatory.³⁸ There was definitely an upward trend in the material standard of living of the average kibbutz member. But on the eve of the War of Independence life was still very hard.

Settlement

The expansion and consolidation of agricultural settlement was no easy task. The provisions of the White Paper restricting Jewish settlement were still in force and, although the Jewish National Fund found ways of circumventing them, the process was long-drawn-out and expensive. Moreover, the Arab National Fund, whose function was to prevent the sale of land to Jews, had resumed its activities, with notably more success than it had enjoyed before the war. The result was that the price of land increased to four times its pre-war level, which restricted the possibility of large-scale purchases. Furthermore, in the immediate post-war period there were comparatively few groups able to carry out permanent settlement: many soldiers had yet to be demobilized, and many more remained at their posts in the Palmach. None the less, settlement continued, though in a somewhat piecemeal fashion, as land became available. Of the nine new kibbutzim founded in 1945, four were set up as *he'ahzuyot*, strengthening areas where the Jewish population was thin on the ground, with special attention being given to regions likely to be controversial or strategically important in any future partition plan: there were four new kibbutzim in Upper Galilee, two in the approaches to Jerusalem (including one in the Etzion bloc) and one each in Western Galilee, the Beit She'an valley, and the coastal plain.³⁹

For the most part, these operations were carried out without interference from the British authorities or active resistance from the neighbouring Arabs. The Zionist executive's 1946 decision in favour of

³⁷ A third person living in a family room. See *KM* i. 185-6.

³⁸ *UAW Report* (1945), 59; Shatil, *Economy*, 211-12.

³⁹ Gvati, *A Century of Settlement*, vol. i, ch. 7.

partition emphasized the need to apply the policy of 'settlement strategy', as it had been understood since the 1930s, as quickly and effectively as possible. Now, as in previous years, it was of vital importance to ensure maximum Jewish presence in areas which might be in dispute when the borders of the future state came to be defined. And this had to be done in a way which could not be nullified by British actions.

This was the background to one of the most dramatic actions of the period. On the morning after Yom Kippur (6 October 1946), nine new kibbutzim and two moshavim were established in the northern Negev. The act came as a surprise not only to most of the Yishuv and to the British authorities, but also to many of the Zionist leaders, who had been misinformed about the timetable in order to allow the work to proceed without undue formalities or interruptions.

I have already emphasized the importance of the Negev to Zionist planners. Slow, secret, and dangerous work by the agents of the Jewish National Fund had consolidated a number of scattered holdings in the region,⁴⁰ so that there was sufficient land for a number of new villages—the eleven 'Yom Kippur' settlements plus four more established during the following year. Three years' experience of the experimental outposts had shown that, with sufficient water, crops could be grown in the area. A plan existed to lay two pipelines which would solve this problem. But the political urgency was deemed to be so great that it was decided to establish the settlements as soon as possible, and bring in drinking-water in tankers until the irrigation pipes could be laid. In the event, the pipelines only reached the Negev settlements just before the War of Independence, and in some instances in the course of the war.

The British authorities were unable to find any means of undoing the achievement of 6 October. The establishment of these settlements went down in Zionist history as an important Jewish victory, which laid the foundations for the inclusion of the Negev in the State of Israel.

Apart from the special case of the Negev, settlement continued along the lines described above until the decision of the United Nations in favour of the establishment of the Jewish state, which triggered the War of Independence. Despite the limitations dictated by shortages of land and money, special efforts were made to maintain the rate of colonization. This became particularly important when, in July 1946, the Jewish authorities eschewed military operations and decreed that settlement, together with continued immigration, should be the main instrument of Zionist policy. Geographically, the emphasis continued to be on

⁴⁰ Porat, 'Methods of Purchasing Land'.

the Negev, where eighteen new Jewish villages were founded in 1946-7. But other areas were also given priority for strategic reasons: between the end of the Second World War and the establishment of the State of Israel three new kibbutzim were set up in Western Galilee, where the few existing Jewish villages could well find themselves in Arab-controlled territory if partition came about, and seven in Upper Galilee, with its command of the headwaters of the Jordan, where the existing Jewish settlements were in danger of isolation if the struggle with the Arabs was renewed. Elsewhere, the settlement authorities devoted most of their efforts to strengthening areas already populated by Jews.

In the period from August 1945 to the end of 1947 fifty-three new Jewish settlements were founded—an average of almost 2 a month, as compared with 1.5 a month in the previous peak of the tower and stockade years. During this period the proportion of kibbutzim in the total was greater than ever: three-quarters, as against two-thirds in 1936-9. This greatly increased rate was a result of the high priority accorded settlement by Zionist policy. It was possible, despite the Land Regulations and the ever-rising price of land, because money could now be transferred from abroad to Palestine, and the growing enthusiasm of American Jewry for the Zionist cause led to a considerable increase in contributions to the Jewish National Fund and the Foundation Fund. The high proportion of kibbutzim was the result of a number of factors: the belief of the Hagana and the settlement authorities that this was the best form of settlement for militarily and politically sensitive areas; the growing strength of the local pioneering youth movements, and their use of 'mobilized training groups' in the framework of the Palmach for new settlement; the backlog of *plugot* originating in the pre-war European youth movements which were still waiting for permanent settlement; and the beginnings of renewed immigration from Europe, much of it organized in pioneering youth movements, 'immigrants' kibbutzim' of the type described above, and Youth Aliya groups. As in previous years, the Kibbutz Me'uhad provided the greatest number of founding groups; it had now abandoned its policy of creating only kibbutzim with special potential for expansion, and many of its new settlements were small, but positioned in strategically important spots.⁴¹ The greater variety of youth movements which had adopted the kibbutz idea during the late 1930s now bore fruit, as can be seen from the diversity of movement affiliations of the new kibbutzim.⁴²

⁴¹ For Kibbutz Me'uhad's earlier settlement policy see *KM* i. 327-8.

⁴² See Appendix 1.

The nucleus of virtually every new kibbutz or moshav established between 1939 and 1945 was a group which had been living on outside work for anything between six and eight years. By 1946 the feverish speed of settlement, the break-up of a number of such groups under the resulting social stresses, and the fact that in many cases new settlements were now founded by more than one group, had used up these reserves. With the foundation of Ein Zeitim in that year a new pattern was set: after acclimatization for a year or two in veteran kibbutzim, graduates of the renewed youth movements of the Diaspora, and of Youth Aliya groups recently arrived in the country, were sent to create new kibbutzim. At the same time, graduates of the youth movements of the Yishuv continued to found new settlements, often together with one or more of the European groups.⁴³ Their youth and lack of experience were to have important social consequences, for good and for ill, over the coming decade.

Strategic Settlement: An Evaluation

From 1936 until the establishment of the State of Israel—and, indeed, for many years thereafter—the notion of ‘strategic settlement’ was a basic element in Zionist settlement policy. It has been argued that ‘by 1939 . . . a geographic nucleus for a Jewish state was present in Palestine’.⁴⁴ In fact, almost all of this nucleus was already in Jewish hands by 1937; and for a decade from that date it was one of the central aims of the Zionist movement and the kibbutzim to strengthen and extend what was to be the heartland of the State of Israel. It is, therefore, of some importance to consider whether the aims of settlement strategy as practised from 1937 to 1948 were in fact achieved, and whether the immense effort required to settle the country was justified by the results.

The phrase ‘strategic settlement’, with its primarily military connotations, is somewhat misleading. From the tower and stockade period onwards kibbutzim were usually constructed, and their exact location determined, with considerations of defence very much in mind. The Hagana was consulted on the location of projected settlements, both in order to regulate their tactical positioning and to ensure such strategic objectives as continuity of settlement in each region and protection of lines of communication. However, the strategy of settlement was not meant primarily to enhance the military function of the new Jewish villages, but rather ‘to alter the map of the Land of Israel by creating new

⁴³ *UAW Report* (1949), 40–7.

⁴⁴ Stein, *The Land Question*, 211.

settlements'.⁴⁵ It is in this context that one must consider the effect of Jewish settlement on the political processes which led to the United Nations' decision of November 1947.

The 1937 Peel Commission proposed the creation of a Jewish state containing a number of areas with a large Jewish population—the coastal strip, approximately from Be'er Tuvia to Zichron Ya'akov; the Jezre'el valley; and Upper Galilee. Territorial continuity was to be attained by the extension of the coastal strip northwards to Haifa, and the addition of the whole of Western and Lower Galilee. The British would retain control of Jerusalem, and of a 'corridor' from the capital to the coast, and the proposed Arab state would cover the rest of the country. A glance at a map of Israel will show that, with the exception of three regions—the Negev, the Jerusalem corridor, and the Beit She'an valley—the Peel proposals covered the territory of the State of Israel as it was defined after the War of Independence. Indeed, until the 1970s 90 per cent of the population of Israel lived in the territory allocated to the Jewish state by the Peel Commission.⁴⁶

The Zionist leaders concluded from the Peel Report that, in any future partition plan, thickly populated Jewish areas would be included in the Jewish state. Hence their efforts to extend Jewish settlement to as broad an area as possible. But an examination of the way in which the borders of the state of Israel were delineated—first by UNSCOP, later along the ceasefire lines at the end of the War of Independence—shows that the process was more complex than the Zionist approach might suggest.

Once the majority of the United Nations committee had decided that partition was the best solution of the Palestine problem, the question of borders became paramount. Here, as in previous commissions, there was no argument about the 'heartland' of the Jewish state as defined by Peel. Moreover, in the reports both of the majority and the (anti-Zionist) minority the Beit She'an valley was included in the Jewish area; and there seems little doubt that this was the direct result of the existence of more than twenty Jewish villages in this area, all founded after 1937.

The major bones of contention, however, were Western Galilee and the Negev. The pro-Zionist members of the committee suggested including both of these regions in the Jewish state. Jorge Garcia-Granados, one of the most clearly committed of this group, has described the discussion on this point:

⁴⁵ Sharett, *Making of Policy*, ii. 172–3.

⁴⁶ Kanari, *Hakibbutz Hameuchad*, 222 n. 106.

The technical difficulties were these. First, Galilee had a large Arab population and a small Jewish one, and was the only really fertile land in Palestine. The Jews had established a number of settlements there, showing their ability to develop this area, and it would be most suitable for their immigration . . . [but others contended that] Western Galilee offered the Arabs the only possibility of future development . . . some of us felt that if Galilee was given to the Arabs, the tremendous investments the Jews had made in the coastal part of Western Galilee, and all their plans for its continued development, would vanish.⁴⁷

This statement can certainly be seen as a vindication of the policy of strategic settlement, for the 'tremendous investment' consisted of the small town of Naharia and seven rural settlements (five kibbutzim and two *moshavim shitufi'im*), as against an Arab population of tens of thousands. But, despite these considerations, Western Galilee was ceded to the Arabs in exchange for the agreement of others on the committee to include the Negev in the Jewish state. Garcia-Granados adds: 'It was, I thought, a fair transaction. . . . When we had visited [the Negev] we realized how much [the Jews] could do with that wasteland, how eager they were to develop it, and how little the Arabs could do, or wished to do, with it.'⁴⁸

In his account of the proceedings of the committee, Garcia-Granados appears as one of the leaders of the pro-Zionist faction. Several elements contributed to the crystallization of his attitude. One was his distrust of Britain, as an imperial power: his suspicion that Britain intended to use the southern Negev as a strategic base, for instance, led him to support the inclusion of this area in the Jewish state. Another was the impression made on him by his visits to several kibbutzim:

It was my sense of the tremendous importance of this kibbutz experiment [for small underdeveloped countries] that was later to strengthen my determination to defend with all my vigor the right of the Jews to a state. . . . I never disclosed this conviction of mine, but it played a decisive part in my thinking. Even if the Jewish legal case had not been as clear as it was, or their moral case not as strong as it was, for me this sociological reason, which deals with the future of all mankind, would have been paramount.⁴⁹

Thus, the very existence of the kibbutzim, regardless of their geographical position, was a factor in the complex of political and moral considerations whose outcome was the decision on partition, and the delineation of the borders of the two Palestinian states. Moreover, the UNSCOP decision was certainly influenced by the impressions which its members

⁴⁷ *Birth of Israel*, 244-5.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 244-6.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* 111.

received in the experimental 'outposts' at Revivim and Beit Ha'arava. Here, they learnt that the Jews were able to achieve the aim they had set themselves, of 'making the desert bloom'. As a result, many—in the end, most—of the committee's members agreed that this undeveloped and almost uninhabited area should be part of the Jewish state.⁶⁰

The principle of partition and the general pattern of the borders as suggested by the committee were approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations. But the inclusion of the Negev as a whole was only finally secured by Cháim Weizmann's personal appeal to President Truman, who overruled the US State Department's stand on this matter; and the result of the negotiations at Lake Success which led up to the UN decision was that the ratio of Jewish to Arab land, 62:38 in the original plan, was reduced to 55:45.⁶¹ While these negotiations were going on, members of the Jewish delegation urged the Jewish authorities in Palestine to establish new settlements in the northern Negev in order to ensure that local sources of water would fall within the Jewish area. But the final plan drawn up at Lake Success did not take account of the current state of settlement.⁶²

Clearly, therefore, the factors which determined the final shape of the borders were many and varied. The demographic balance in the different regions which resulted from Jewish settlement strategy over more than a decade was certainly one of them. But it was far from being the only element in the complex equation which determined the United Nations' final decision on the borders of Israel. Others were the consequence of political and diplomatic considerations, and even of personal predilections, which had little to do with the situation on the spot.

Thus, if settlement strategy over a decade of intensive development is judged by the extent to which it broadened the area allocated to the Jews by Peel, it would seem to have been effective in three regions only: the Negev and its northerly approaches, where thirty kibbutzim were established during the decade, the Beit She'an valley, with its twelve new kibbutzim, and a small area east of the Jordan river, at the south-east of Lake Kinneret, where four kibbutzim were founded. The other seventy-one kibbutzim founded between the report of the Peel Commission and the appointment of the United Nations committee were 'wasted' from the point of view of deciding the shape of the Jewish state. Many of them simply added to the population in areas which were certain to be allo-

⁶⁰ *Birth of Israel*, 75, 85-9.

⁶¹ Horowitz, *In the Service of the New-born State*; Weizmann, *Trial and Error*, 458-9; Gani, 'The 1947 UN's Resolution'.

⁶² Shiran, 'Settlement Policy', 40.

cated to the Jews under any partition proposal: the coastal plain, and Upper Galilee, which would have been Jewish territory even according to the Morrison–Grady plan. Other regions—Western Galilee and the Etzion bloc—were outside the Jewish area on all the proposed maps except that submitted by the Jewish Agency in 1947. In stringent geopolitical terms the dozen new settlements in these regions were also wasted.

Though the final map of Israel was based largely on the UNSCOP plan, it was altered considerably as a result of the War of Independence. This underlines the fact that the political processes I have described here constituted only one of the functions of Jewish settlement. The role played by the kibbutzim and moshavim in the defence of the Yishuv and the State of Israel, at both the local and the national level, was undoubtedly of no less importance. It can only be properly appraised in the context of the War of Independence and its aftermath. I shall, therefore, return to this subject in Chapter 6.

The War of Independence

THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE can be divided roughly into five phases:¹

1. 29 November 1947–1 April 1948. Immediately after the decision of the United Nations to create a Jewish state, irregular Palestinian Arab forces began to attack Jewish settlements and lines of transport. Units of the Arab Liberation Army, recruited from the surrounding Arab countries, entered the country and took part in the fighting. At this stage the British were still in effective control of Palestine, the Hagana was badly hampered by lack of arms, and its operations were largely defensive.

2. 1 April–15 May 1948. The Hagana began to receive considerable quantities of arms from Czechoslovakia, and the British were beginning to prepare actively for evacuation. The Hagana went over to the offensive, in a partly successful attempt to open the road to Jerusalem, which was by then cut off from the rest of the Yishuv. One important incident at this stage was the capture of the village of Deir Yassin, near Jerusalem, by the IZL, and the killing of its inhabitants. Simultaneously, fighting in the north resulted in the repulsion of Fauzi el Kaukji's Arab Liberation Army, and the Jews gaining control of Haifa, Tiberias, and Safed. Jaffa was taken, mainly by the IZL, but the Etzion bloc, which guarded the southern approaches to Jerusalem, was conquered by the Arabs of the surrounding district, and eventually surrendered to the Arab Legion.

3. 15 May–10 June 1948. Immediately after the British evacuation and the declaration of Israel's independence, the country was invaded by a number of Arab armies. In the north the Syrians, the Arab Liberation Army, and the Iraqis attacked the Jordan valley and other parts of Lower Galilee, but had little success in taking Jewish settlements. The Iraqis established themselves in the Jenin–Nablus–Tulkarm triangle, but were more or less contained there by Israeli forces. The Arab Legion captured the Old City of Jerusalem. There were fierce battles for the control of the road to Jerusalem, including three unsuccessful Israeli attacks on Latrun which cost

¹ This periodization, and background material about the war in general, is based on Lorch, *The Edge of the Sword*; Wallach, *Atlas of Palestine*; Wallach, *Atlas of Israel*.

many lives, but the New (Jewish) City was saved from complete isolation by the use of the 'Burma road', which bypassed the Arab-controlled highway to the city. On the southern front, the Egyptians advanced to within 32 kilometres of Tel Aviv, though their advance was fiercely contested both by the settlements situated along the way and by the Hagana.

4. 10 June–19 July 1948. A period of truce, of which the last ten days were broken by fierce battles. From the beginning of June, the name of the Hagana was changed to the Israel Defence Force (IDF; in Hebrew, Zva Hagana LeYisrael, or Zahal), and shortly afterwards the IZL and the Lehi were incorporated into it. This harmony was marred by the incident of the *Altalena*, a ship carrying arms and men destined for the IZL which was prevented from landing by units of the Palmach at Ben-Gurion's orders, and blown up off the coast of Tel Aviv. During the ten days' fighting, Israeli forces captured Nazareth, Ramleh, and Lydda, but another attempt to open the way to Jerusalem by an attack on Latrun was unsuccessful. The Egyptians kept up their pressure in the Negev, and captured kibbutz Kfar Darom, but two other strategically kibbutzim, Negba and Be'erot Yitzhak, withstood fierce attacks. Though the Israeli forces took the initiative during this period, it ended without a clear decision for either side.

5. 19 July 1948–10 March 1949. This period, known as 'the second truce' because of the Security Council's decision to impose a ceasefire, was marked by a series of operations which confirmed the Israeli victory, and settled the *de facto* borders of the State of Israel as they stood at the time of the armistice agreements (February–July 1949). The Israelis attacked in the Negev, drove out the Egyptian army (apart from in the Gaza Strip), and established Israeli sovereignty over the south of the country, as far as Eilat. In the north, the Arab Liberation Army was driven out, and the whole of Galilee thereby left under Israeli control. During this period the division between Jewish and Arab Jerusalem (the latter under Jordanian control) was stabilized, and its boundaries defined.

THE WAR AND THE KIBBUTZIM

In each of these stages kibbutzim and kibbutz members played important, sometimes crucial, roles, some of which I shall discuss below. There were also many ways apart from the strictly military in which the war affected every kibbutz, whether or not it was of special strategic importance.

In the years of local tranquillity after 1939 most of the kibbutzim had

let their defences deteriorate: fences and fortifications had been dismantled or left in disrepair, and buildings originally needed for defence purposes had been taken over for civilian uses. In the earliest stage of the fighting, when the weapons were similar to those used eight years earlier, it was enough to repair these fortifications. But, with the advent of regular forces armed with artillery and other heavy weapons, they were not sufficient: instead of the classic stockade and the concrete 'security room' for non-combatants, it was necessary to dig bunkers and communication trenches, sometimes in feverish haste while the enemy was approaching.

Travel became dangerous. All the kibbutzim laid in basic stocks of food and fuel. But the very nature of the kibbutz economy, and the need to keep the Yishuv supplied with food, meant that, except in circumstances of extreme danger, communications had to be kept up and produce sent to market. In the great majority of cases work in the fields continued, despite attacks by neighbouring villagers, sniping, and the necessity to strengthen defences against the approach of the invading armies; throughout the war the Yishuv never starved. But in some thirty cases, when a settlement was under direct attack, all civilian work was suspended, and the kibbutz functioned as a military strong-point under military command.² Another problem, particularly for isolated kibbutzim and those likely to be in the line of battle, was the safety of children and other non-combatants. Tabenkin adopted an extreme approach, maintaining that the presence of children during an attack would increase the defendants' will to win.³ His view was generally adopted by the central bodies of the Kibbutz Me'uhad, and echoed by many of those in the endangered kibbutzim. In practice, however, it was found that the presence of non-combatants at times of extreme danger was a distraction from the central imperatives of fortification and battle. In the final resort, the decision was made by those on the spot; and when a kibbutz was under military command at times of extreme danger evacuation was always considered to be an operational necessity. Some 10,000 people—children and other non-combatants—were evacuated from ninety front-line and isolated settlements. They were lodged in towns or other kibbutzim, some of them for as long as two years. About 1,500 head of livestock were also evacuated from danger areas.⁴

² Raman, 'The Greatness of the Hour', gives a detailed account of the defence of kibbutzim (and other settlements) which were evacuated, including the deliberations which led up to the evacuation. Much of this paragraph is based on this work.

³ For example in his speech at the council of the Kibbutz Me'uhad in June 1948. Tabenkin, *Devarim*, iv. 214-17.

⁴ Dinur, *Hagana*, iii. 1594; *UAW Report* (1949), 31.

Another type of evacuation was also discussed in the earliest days of the war. The Jewish Agency, while far from satisfied with the borders of the state as defined by the United Nations, had accepted the partition decision, and was prepared to abide by it. But there were still thirty-three Jewish settlements outside the bounds of the proposed Jewish state, many of them small and isolated. It is notable that in the course of the discussions about their fate it was the settlers themselves who pressed most strongly for the decision which was eventually adopted: no settlement was evacuated, except in the face of overwhelming enemy pressure. This decision had far-reaching consequences for the course and results of the war.⁵

The first stage of the war opened with skirmishes in the cities and attacks on the roads reminiscent of the Arab revolt at its height. This time, however, the British played a much more neutral role: by May 1948 Tel Aviv and Jaffa were hostile camps, and Jewish Jerusalem was under siege. The first attacks on agricultural settlements took place in January 1948. Four kibbutzim (Kfar Szold in Upper Galilee, Yehiam in Western Galilee, Tirat Zvi in the Beit She'an valley, and Ef'al on the outskirts of Tel Aviv) and one moshav (Kfar Oria, between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem) were attacked. They sustained a number of casualties, but managed to repel the enemy until British forces arrived. Apparently this was enough to convince the Arabs that it was not worth their while to attack isolated settlements until the coast was clear.

During this stage of the war Jewish transport was constantly subject to attack. By March 1948 many Jewish towns and settlements, including Jerusalem, could be reached only by convoy—civilian vehicles protected by armoured cars. Some of the operations intended to relieve the blockade have entered into history as examples of exceptional heroism.⁶ In January 1948 thirty-five Palmach soldiers were killed in an attempt to reach the beleaguered Etzion bloc on foot. In March of that year several convoys were repulsed, with heavy loss of life and equipment. Among them was the convoy to kibbutz Yehiam.

Yehiam itself was a small, extremely isolated settlement on the site of a crusader castle (Jedin) in Western Galilee. It had been established in 1946 to extend the Jewish presence in the region and to command a view of the lines of communication inland from the coast. Now, however, in

⁵ *UAW Report* (1949), 15-16.

⁶ For instance Netiv Hashayara (the Path of the Convoy) and Ben Ami (the commander of the Yehiam convoy), both moshavim in Western Galilee, and Netiv Halamed Hei (the Path of the Thirty-five), a kibbutz in the approaches to Jerusalem, are named after those killed close to their locations in these operations.

common with the other Jewish settlements of Western Galilee, it found itself outside the official bounds of the Jewish state, in the heart of a hostile and heavily populated Arab area. A convoy from Naharia managed by surprise tactics to reach a point some 16 kilometres from the kibbutz, but was ambushed and destroyed after a battle lasting ten hours, with the loss of forty-seven lives. The kibbutz withstood the siege and further attacks with the help of food and ammunition dropped by air.

Meanwhile, a number of crucial battles had been taking place further south. At the beginning of April the Arab Liberation Army, which had unsuccessfully attacked Tirat Zvi in February, attempted to take Mishmar Ha'emek. Strategically, the whole of this area, in the hinterland of Haifa, was of major importance to the Yishuv: it commanded Wadi Milek, the pass joining the coastal road from Tel Aviv and the intensively settled coastal strip to the agricultural settlements of the Jezre'el valley and the Haifa area.

The battle of Mishmar Ha'emek lasted about ten days. It involved bombardment and direct attacks on the kibbutz itself, and spread to the whole of the immediate area, with counter-attacks by Israeli forces, and supporting actions by other units of the Arab Liberation Army—mainly Druze soldiers—against the nearby kibbutz of Ramat Yohanan. The Israeli fighters profited greatly from the fact that many of them had received their training at the Palmach base near Mishmar Ha'emek, and were very familiar with the terrain, but the Arabs had a distinct advantage in firepower and numbers. Eventually, however, the Israelis won the day, and this battle became one of the turning-points of the first stage of the war. Extracts from contemporary reports give a vivid sense of these battles. In Mishmar Ha'emek:

We knew that there were huge forces arrayed against us, and that we were comparatively few. The feeling of complete isolation from the rest of the Yishuv, especially from the Emek,⁷ to which we were joined only by a tenuous radio link, became stronger. But it did not last long. At midnight there arrived the first units of the Hagana in the Emek, dusty and tired from their hard night trek, but ready for battle. This partnership between us and the Emek continued from then until the last day of the battle. We defended the Emek, and the Emek defended us.

One evening we received a message that a convoy from Sarid with equipment that we particularly needed was on its way. [When it was late arriving, we were very worried, for] only the day before a convoy from the Emek had been turned

⁷ Emek: literally 'valley', but used in spoken Hebrew to mean Emek Yizre'el, the Jezre'el valley. The repetition of this word echoes the name of the kibbutz: Mishmar Ha'emek, the guardian of the valley.

back by heavy artillery fire. At midnight . . . sixty boys from the Emek arrived, carrying the equipment on their backs, in addition to their weapons, so that the enemy's attention should not be drawn by the noise of trucks. This convoy . . . seemed to symbolize the Emek, our faithful partner throughout the battle.

In Ramat Yohanan:

After the [first] attack had been beaten off, our forces mounted a counter-attack, and succeeded in taking the two neighbouring [Arab] villages of Kseir and Usha. This ruined the plans of the Druze, and they immediately began a heavy bombardment and frontal attacks on the villages from both our flanks in order to win them back. They attacked nine times, until we succeeded in holding them and driving them back with exceedingly heavy losses. . . . Some of our men showed incredible courage and devotion in this action, which lasted a whole day and night.⁸

By contrast, the Etzion bloc, the group of four kibbutzim to the south of Jerusalem, was the major failure of this stage of the war. This area had first been settled by Jews in modern times in 1927 but was evacuated after the riots of 1929, when some sixty Jews were massacred in nearby Hebron. The availability of land and the strategic importance of the area, which commanded the southern approaches to Jerusalem, persuaded the Jewish authorities that it was important to renew settlement there, and from 1943 onwards four kibbutzim, three belonging to the religious Kibbutz Dati movement and one to the Kibbutz Artzi, were established. From the first they had encountered active opposition from the Arabs in the area, and this increased rapidly as the date of the British evacuation approached. At this time fighters from the Etzion bloc were active in harassing Arab transport between Hebron and Jerusalem, particularly while fighting was going on in Jerusalem itself. By May 1948 the children and some of the women had been evacuated, and there were in the bloc about 110 settlers, together with some 100 Hagana soldiers. Positions on the road to Jerusalem were taken up and defended with great tenacity by both the settlers and the Hagana reinforcements. But the size of the enemy forces, composed both of the Arabs of the district and units of the Arab Legion, proved too great, and with Jerusalem under siege it proved impossible to send further help. On 12 May 1948 Kfar Etzion was conquered, and all but four of the defenders massacred. On 14 May the other three kibbutzim in the bloc—Massuot Yitzhak, Ein Tzurim, and Revadim—surrendered to the Arab Legion. The women and wounded were set free, and the able-bodied men taken

⁸ *UAW Report* (1949), 18–19.

prisoner. The loss of the Etzion bloc was a major blow to the Jews, on the very eve of the establishment of the State of Israel. Sheer numbers had defeated faith and courage.

It is often said that the Deir Yassin massacre was a major cause of the mass abandonment of threatened areas by the civilian Arab population, in the conviction that no quarter was to be expected, especially after the evacuation of the British troops. The historical truth is apparently more complex, as will be seen later in this chapter. On the other hand, there can be no doubt that the Kfar Etzion incident, which was widely publicized and commented upon, served to stiffen the resistance of the Jews, who felt deeply that they had nowhere to retreat to. In the slogan of the time, there was no alternative.

Simultaneously with the successful operation in Western Galilee and the fall of the Etzion bloc there was fighting in the Negev. Here, there were two basic problems which did not exist to the same degree in other areas. The distances between the Jewish settlements were relatively great, and the settlements themselves were mostly young and undeveloped, with few members. From the very beginning of the war, the water pipelines on which they depended had been under attack. The main road to the Negev (from Be'er Tuvia to Nir Am) was frequently blocked by Palestinian irregulars and foreign Arab volunteers based in the local villages. In order to ensure safe passage to the south a new kibbutz was set up along the route in April 1948: Bror Hayil, the first kibbutz to be established during the War of Independence.⁹ During the first two weeks of May all the Arab villages on the main road to the Negev were occupied by Hagana forces, thus allowing free access to the area by motorized transport.

After the departure of the British in May 1948, the way was clear for the entry of armies from the neighbouring Arab states. A Syrian force, equipped with tanks and artillery, attacked in the Jordan valley. Its objective was the heavily populated area at the south of Lake Kinneret, where there were ten kibbutzim representing virtually every phase of the development of the kibbutz: from Kinneret, Degania Aleph, and Degania Beit, then close to their fortieth year, to a group of four kibbutzim at the south-east end of the Kinneret which had been established as tower and stockade settlements. Two of these—Ein Gev and Gesher—held out heroically under heavy attack over the coming month. Two—Massada and Sha'ar Hagolan—were overwhelmed by superior forces and

⁹ Bror Hayil was originally established as a fortified outpost, and settled as a kibbutz by its permanent members some two months later.

abandoned, to be pillaged and destroyed by their triumphant neighbours. After heavy fighting for the Arab town of Tsemah the Syrian forces approached Degania Aleph. The veteran kibbutzim, set so close to each other that the area was known as 'the republic of *kvutzot*', had not appreciated that they were in danger, and the children and invalids were evacuated only when the fighting reached Tsemah, little more than a mile away. Meanwhile, some of the veteran members of Degania had gone to Tel Aviv to ask for help. Ben-Gurion replied that the whole of the country was in danger, and that none could be given. In the event, however, some reinforcements—mostly infantry—were sent. Yig'al Yadin, the chief of operations, suggested that they should let the enemy come close to the kibbutz, and then engage them in close combat. Whether by design or chance, this is what happened. The Syrian tanks reached the gates of both Deganias. One tank was put out of action by a Molotov cocktail, another abandoned by its crew. Shortly afterwards, the Israelis were reinforced by two artillery field-pieces, and their fire was an added factor in prompting the Syrian forces to retreat. The battle of the Jordan valley had ended.

As Netanel Lorch remarks, the significance of this battle

was not only in that it saved the Jordan valley from the invaders. . . . It had a salutary effect on the morale of the whole Yishuv, strengthening its conviction that it could repel the invaders. In spite of the disparity in numbers and equipment, the settlers of Degania had been able to hold out against an enemy enjoying superiority in armour, artillery, and air strength because of their obstinacy, determination, and a high level of training and command. News of the successful defence of Degania . . . spread quickly throughout the country, encouraging settlements that had begun to doubt their ability to withstand the assault of regular armies, particularly after the dismal experience of the Etzion bloc.¹⁰

The other major front in which kibbutzim were heavily involved was the Negev. Here, the road along which the Egyptian army was to advance was flanked by six kibbutzim, all of them young and sparsely populated. The first to be attacked, even before the official opening of the invasion, was the religious kibbutz of Kfar Darom, whose members were reinforced by a platoon of the Palmach. The battle was fierce, and the Egyptians (mostly members of the fanatical Muslim Brothers movement) were held off by a combination of the defenders' heroism and lack of co-ordination between the attackers. None the less, Kfar Darom remained under siege and heavy artillery fire for several weeks afterwards. At the end of the

¹⁰ *The Edge of the Sword*, 154.

first ceasefire it was decided that the position was not defensible, and its occupants were evacuated by the Negev Brigade of the Palmach.

The Egyptians were able to bypass Kfar Darom, but they decided that kibbutz Yad Mordechai, some 48 kilometres north along the coast, must be reduced before they could safely advance on Tel Aviv. It took five days of desperate fighting for them to achieve this aim. The 180 defenders were reinforced by a platoon of the Palmach, whose commander was killed in the battle. But it eventually became clear that they could not withstand the single-minded assault of some four battalions. They slipped through the enemy lines, having failed in the attempt to save the kibbutz from capture, but succeeded in holding up the Egyptian advance for five vital days. The following extract from the 'Battle Diary of Yad Mordechai' was written almost immediately after the evacuation:

[On the fifth day of the assault] towards evening, tanks drew near the south-west side of the kibbutz. The alarm was given, and the defenders approached [the tanks]. The heavy machine-gun, which should have fired from the western side, was damaged and put out of action. All our other automatic weapons were filthy from the sand which sprayed on them with every shell explosion. Even so, when the tank succeeded in breaking through the fence the defenders stormed it with the Bren gun, grenades, and rifles. . . . But from behind the tank came infantry whose fire claimed many casualties, despite the many acts of bravery of our comrades.

This attack was beaten off, but our men were completely exhausted, and unable to function properly. The British ammunition had given out. There were very few grenades. The best of our fighters had fallen, and there was nobody to relieve those who had been engaged in a face-to-face struggle only half an hour earlier. All the outposts were breached. There was no one to send on guard, the number of wounded was so great.

The choice was clear: to fall into the hands of the enemy alive, or to try to evacuate the kibbutz, and save as many of our wounded as possible . . .

We did not weep when we saw our comrades fall in battle. But when we were about to leave the kibbutz there were tears in people's eyes. We had invested the best of our strength and ability in this spot, and it stood proudly among the sand-hills, bringing fresh life to all around it. We have done all that man can do, we have given all that human strength can give. We are determined to return!

Soil of Yad Mordechai, soaked with our comrades' blood—we shall yet return and redeem you. We shall return to make you live and blossom!¹¹

I have described these battles, and the experiences and attitudes of the defenders, in some detail because they were among the most critical and the most famous conflicts of the war. But they were far from being the

¹¹ *UAW Report* (1949), 24-5.

only military operations in which kibbutzim were involved. Kfar Darom and Yad Mordechai fell, as did Nitzanim. Negba, reinforced by units of the IDF, held off two attacks of the Egyptian army in an equally desperate struggle. Gal-On and Be'erot Yitzhak were attacked: half of the area of Be'erot Yitzhak was occupied by the Egyptians, but it was eventually relieved by the Palmach forces. On the Jerusalem front, Ramat Rahel and Gezer were taken, but retaken later by counter-attacks of the Palmach. In many cases the chances of war dictated the outcome no less than did the bravery and skill of the defenders.

In some instances, where kibbutzim were evacuated in the face of superior forces, there was a good deal of criticism at the time, though little of it was publicized.¹² The kibbutz movements concerned subsequently appointed committees of inquiry, most of which emphasized the difficulties of defence and, in effect, justified the evacuation. The major exception was Nitzanim, which was directly in the path of the Egyptian army as it advanced towards Tel Aviv. After a fierce battle, its defending force—seventy members, ten of them women, and an equal number of soldiers—surrendered to the Egyptians. The military commander of the region accused them of cowardice, and they were fiercely condemned in an order of the day by Abba Kovner, once leader of the Vilna ghetto revolt, now an education officer of the Palmach.¹³ But the general picture of the kibbutzim which came under direct attack is of stubborn and heroic defence, which frequently held up the enemy forces even if it could not halt their advance, and in so doing made a vital contribution to the eventual victory.

In all, ninety-seven agricultural settlements were attacked and suffered material damage in the course of the war. Of these, four kibbutzim were conquered and retaken within two days; two kibbutzim and two moshavim were evacuated by order of the military authorities as being indefensible; one moshav and one kibbutz were abandoned after stubborn defence; and six kibbutzim surrendered.¹⁴ The total damage was estimated at about £P4,000,000.

The greatest damage of all, however, was not in material goods but in human life and human suffering. There is no reliable estimate of the number of wounded in the war, but it is known that of the 5,700–5,800

¹² Tabenkin, 'In the Light of the State'.

¹³ Raman, 'The Greatness of the Hour', 96–8.

¹⁴ Conquered and retaken: Sha'ar Hagolan, Massada, Gezer, Ramat Rahel. Evacuated: Beit Ha'arava, Kfar Darom, Hartuv, Neveh Ya'akov. Abandoned: Yad Mordechai, Atarot. Surrendered: Kfar Etzion, Massuot Yitzhak, Ein Tzurim, Revadim, Nitzanim, Mishmar Hayarden.

who were killed, 689 were kibbutz members—10.1 per cent of the relevant age-group, as against 6.6 per cent in the general population.¹⁵

Not all these people were killed defending their own kibbutzim. But those who died far from home also fought as kibbutz members, most of them in the groups destined for eventual settlement which participated in the war as part of the Palmach. As I have shown, the Palmach itself was in origin and spirit part of the kibbutz movement, even though this character was modified in some measure as a result of its expansion during the first months of the war. It is, therefore, necessary to trace the ways in which the Palmach developed, changed, and was eventually disbanded in the course of the war.

THE PALMACH IN THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

Even before the outbreak of fighting in November 1947, it was clear that one of the major problems of the Yishuv in any future war would be the lack of manpower to stand against the numerically superior Arab forces. It was, therefore, the first task of the Hagana to enrol and train as many recruits as possible. In the first stage of the war this was done by enlarging and adapting the formations already in existence. In the large towns 'field service units' were created, which developed into independent infantry brigades; other units, made up of older and less physically able men and women, were employed for local defence. Except for small, isolated, or endangered settlements, the kibbutzim and moshavim, whose members automatically belonged to the Hagana, gave 7 per cent of their adult populations to the mobilized forces. Most of these joined the active units of the Palmach, which called up its reserve forces immediately the fighting began. At the same time, recruiting in the Cyprus camps and among new immigrants was stepped up, and many groups of volunteers from abroad received their basic training with Palmach units. Even before the war, however, although the bulk of the Palmach's officers were present or future kibbutz members, most of its members were recruited from the towns. The swift growth of the force during the War of Independence made the proportion of the urban element even greater.

The Palmach was, however, still a small force in proportion to the size

¹⁵ Sivan, *The 1948 Generation*, 112–13. This figure does not include the members of the 'mobilized training groups', 174 of whom were killed—a proportion similar to that of the general population in the parallel age-group. Sivan remarks that the proportion of kibbutz members killed was similar to that of another 'serving élite'—graduates of Oxford and Cambridge in the British armed forces during the Second World War.

of the Yishuv and the need to mobilize fully for an all-out war. In November 1947, when the Palestinian Arabs began attacking the Yishuv, it comprised 2,100 fully mobilized men and women, and 1,000 'reserves', who had returned to civilian life after two years or more of active service. At the time of the declaration of independence six months later, it had grown to some 5,900, organized in three brigades. This was no longer the slow, selective recruitment and intensive training which had characterized the Palmach until that time, but a more rapid absorption of recruits from both town and country.¹⁶

The increase in size and the exigencies of war dictated organizational changes. In the early days of the war, the first battalion was stationed in the Jezre'el valley and Lower Galilee, where it kept open lines of communication and gave aid where needed—for instance, in the battle of Haifa, the defence of isolated kibbutzim, and the battles of Tirat Zvi and Mishmar Ha'emek. The second battalion covered the southern coastal plain and the Negev; its task was to keep lines of communication open, and to defend the water pipelines without which the southern settlements could not survive. The third battalion was stationed in the eastern part of Upper Galilee and, by active defence measures and attacks on concentrations of hostile elements, kept this area under Jewish control. This battalion was also a major element in the Jewish victories at Safed and Tiberias, and the capture of abandoned British camps in the district. The fourth ('headquarters') battalion included the air and naval units of the Palmach, as well as a special intelligence unit which operated in Arab disguise. The naval forces played an active, but on the whole marginal, part in the first stage of the war. The air unit, tiny and ill equipped though it was, supplied aid to besieged units and settlements which was sometimes crucial for their survival. At an early stage, however, the sea and air units were detached from the Palmach, and became the nuclei of the Israeli navy and air force. The ground elements of the fourth battalion were active in retaliatory operations, while the disguised unit joined the intelligence service.

With the increase in the number of combatants and in the scope of the war in its third stage, these battalions grew to three brigades, each comprising three battalions and numbering more than 2,000 men and women, which played a major part in some of the decisive battles of the war. By the time of the establishment of the State of Israel there were ten brigades in its fighting forces: one mechanized and six infantry brigades, which had grown from the local branches of the Hagana, some to as

¹⁶ Dinur, *Hagana*, iii. 1488.

many as 3,500 soldiers; and three Palmach brigades, numbering about 2,000 each, which had already won a full measure of battle experience and martial glory.

From May 1948 onwards this experience was used to the full. The Yiftah brigade in the north defeated the invading Lebanese army and was then moved south to take part in the battle for Jerusalem. After participating in the costly but abortive fighting in and around Latrun it was transferred further south to the Negev. The Harel brigade was named after the site of one of its most hard-fought battles, in which it conquered the villages skirting the road to Jerusalem by bitter hand-to-hand fighting, thereby breaking the siege just before the declaration of independence in May 1948. In the following stages of the war it fought against the Arab Legion in and around Jerusalem, playing an important part in the battles to establish a corridor from the coastal area to the capital, and was then sent south to participate in the Negev campaign. There, it worked in close liaison with the third major Palmach unit, the Negev brigade. This, perhaps the most famous and romanticized of the Palmach brigades, developed a style of fighting of its own—highly mobile, based on imaginative use of armoured jeeps and mechanized units and an intimate knowledge of the terrain. It was the nucleus of the force which pursued the Egyptians into Sinai, and won the race to occupy Eilat.

The special style of warfare of the Palmach, which emerged from its pre-state origins but was developed and refined in the crucible of the War of Independence, was based on the independence and initiative of the individual fighter and the small unit, a genius for creative planning and improvisation, and comradeship between fighters—officers and men alike. All these elements and others, such as the role of women in battle, even the special style of dress, caught the imagination of the Israeli people, and raised the morale of civilians and soldiers. Just as the caricaturist's picture of the young man in the kibbutznik's 'dunce's cap' (*kova tembel*) had become the symbol of the Israeli in his social and national manifestations, so the Palmachnik in his Balaclava helmet (*kova gerev*), his informal style of uniform, and his beard became the symbol of the Israeli at war. The commander of the Palmach (Yig'al Allon of kibbutz Ginossar), the commanders of the Harel brigade which opened the way to Jerusalem (Yitzhak Rabin, and later Yoseph Tabenkin of Ein Harod), and the commander of the Negev brigade (Nahum Sarig of Beit Hashita) became national heroes. Others, such as Yitzhak Sadeh, the first commander of the Palmach and now in charge of the eighth armoured

brigade, and Shimon Avidan of Ein Hashofet, commander of the Giv'ati brigade, were well known as veteran Palmachniks, even though they were now commanding other units.

None the less, on 7 November 1948, while Palmach units were still among those actively consolidating the Israeli victory, its high command was abolished, and in May 1949 all its units were disbanded and absorbed into other formations of the Israeli army. Both this act and its consequences were of considerable importance to the kibbutz movement and the young State of Israel.

To some extent the tension between the Palmach and the rest of the Israeli army can be seen as a continuation of the uniform—mufti controversy of the Second World War years. Between 1945 and 1948 many soldiers had been demobilized from the British army, bringing with them a wealth of experience and technical knowledge. Some attempts were made to absorb them into the Hagana, but with very limited success, and usually by a process of assimilation, whereby they accepted its methods and folkways while putting their expertise at its disposal. This mainly involved ex-soldiers in the kibbutzim, where absorption into the Hagana was automatic, and was seen as part of the return to kibbutz life. It was only with the outbreak of the War of Independence that former soldiers from outside the kibbutzim were integrated into the Hagana in significant numbers.¹⁷

This was one of the reasons for Ben-Gurion's deep dissatisfaction with the state of the Hagana when he took on ministerial responsibility for the defence of the Yishuv in March 1947. In his view the Hagana commanders, who had been trained for guerrilla warfare, had not taken into account the probability that the Yishuv would have to withstand attack by regular armies from the Arab states. One of the symptoms of this unpreparedness was a disastrous lack of arms and equipment. Ben-Gurion rejected the Hagana's suggested budget, and 'with the help of certain friends' prepared an alternative proposal, three times the size of the original budget. Concurrently, he initiated a vast effort to purchase arms and equipment of types and in quantities hitherto unheard of in the Hagana.¹⁸

Ben-Gurion's 'friends' were former officers in the British and other armies, whom he saw as professional soldiers, as against the 'partisans' who made up the Hagana, and particularly the Palmach. A report written in February 1948 by an ex-officer in the US army said: 'There is not a

¹⁷ Dinur, *Hagana*, 1255–8; Gelber, *Jewish Army*, 15–20.

¹⁸ Dinur, *Hagana*, iii. 1329–32.

single [Hagana] officer who knows how to move a battalion. . . . In the Palmach there is first-rate human material, courageous, but its officers only know how to work with a platoon or a company.'¹⁹

The officers of the Hagana and the Palmach learnt how to move battalions, and even brigades. But, particularly in the early stages of the war, they were under constant pressure from Ben-Gurion to absorb and promote officers who had served in regular armies, and to adopt the methods they had learnt there, even though these people and their ideas often seemed unacceptable to the men on the spot. Their attitude was based at least in part on the reluctance to accept outsiders which was an inevitable concomitant of the Palmach's highly developed *esprit de corps*. But it was not entirely unfounded. The men of the Jewish Brigade had taken part in the fighting in Italy, but few, if any, of them had commanded large and complex military units. Ben-Gurion insisted on promoting several of them to positions of high authority, even though they had had little or no experience of fighting or command under local conditions.

The conflict was not only about personalities. To a large extent, Ben-Gurion was attempting to change the character, structure, and fighting traditions of the Hagana, which had grown up under conspiratorial conditions, depended greatly on the mutual knowledge and trust of officers and men, and emphasized in its training the independence and initiative of small units. Foreseeing the relatively large-scale war against the invading Arab armies he demanded total mobilization of the Yishuv, which would involve forms of organization, training, and discipline suited to a regular army. The ex-Hagana officers advocated a more cautious approach, which would base the development of the army on the expansion of tried and trusted units, as in the case of the Palmach. Ben-Gurion was totally opposed to the attempt to transpose the spirit and methods of the Palmach to the expanded army. In his eyes, it was the most extreme of the undisciplined, ill-organized 'partisan' bodies in the Hagana.

He also claimed that it was partisan in another sense. The great majority of its officers were members of the kibbutzim of the Kibbutz Me'uhad and Kibbutz Artzi, or close to them politically, and he was convinced that the desire to preserve this advantage lay behind opposition to his pressure to nominate ex-army officers. Equally, the commanders of the Hagana believed that his nominations were motivated by political rather than military considerations.

¹⁹ Report by Colonel Michael Marcus (Stone), summarized in Ben-Gurion's diary, 2 Mar. 1948, quoted in Dinur, *Hagana*, iii. 1483.

The political tensions erupted around the position of Israel Galili, a member of Na'an, a Kibbutz Me'uhad settlement, and a protégé of Tabenkin. Since 1937 he had been a member, and since June 1947 the head, of the high command of the Hagana. This was a political appointment, which served as the senior link between the civilian directorate of the Hagana and the military staff. Galili was known as a devoted worker and gifted administrator; patient and diplomatic, he was capable of mediating between conflicting demands and personalities. Ben-Gurion had appointed him to his post with the approval of all parties and sectors of the clandestine military establishment. The military chief of staff was Ya'akov Dostrovsky (Dori), generally considered a very efficient officer, and a strong disciplinarian. But between January and August 1948 he was frequently ill, and Galili was, in effect, acting chief of staff. Together with the rest of the General Staff, he expressed deep reservations about Ben-Gurion's attempt to impose ex-army officers on the existing establishment.

By the spring of 1948 Ben-Gurion had become convinced that Galili's position, vital during the underground period of the Hagana, was now superfluous. He discussed the matter with Galili, but they reached no agreement. But at the beginning of May 1948, less than two weeks before the end of the British mandate, the establishment of the state, and the Arab invasion, he ordered the abolition of Galili's post, and the transfer of all his functions to himself.

Ben-Gurion's demand sparked off a series of events in which he was ranged against virtually the whole of the high command of the Hagana and most of the political forces in the Yishuv. The climax came with the resignation of the high command in May 1948 in support of Galili, and the appointment of a committee under the chairmanship of the minister of the interior, Yitzhak Gruenbaum (of the General Zionist party) to examine the relationship between the government, as the supreme political authority, and the military command. The committee suggested the establishment of a war cabinet, and clear definitions of the functions of those concerned with the direction of the war; Galili was to retain a post between Ben-Gurion and the high command of the IDF. Ben-Gurion's reaction was to tender his resignation, but he withdrew it when the committee's suggestions were shelved.

This was one of several occasions in Ben-Gurion's career when he demonstrated his determination to establish his supreme authority and, when challenged, to back his demands by threatening to resign. At this time it was a clear warning that he saw the Palmach and its supporters as

a threat to his sole supremacy, which he considered vital to the effective prosecution of the war.²⁰

Galili left his post at the beginning of July 1948, and the Palmach played an active part in the fighting until the end of the war. But as the scope of the war grew broader the number of other units fighting side by side with the Palmach increased. As a result, there arose problems of logistics and communications which provided a rational basis for the demand that the local command of each front should receive its orders direct from the General Staff, and not through two separate channels of command. When, in November 1948, Ben-Gurion issued a directive to disband the Palmach's central command this came as no surprise. But it aroused a storm of opposition which was not solely confined to Mapam and its supporters. There were many who admired the Palmach's military accomplishments, and wanted its spirit and ways of action to remain part of the Israeli army. None the less, the public discussion was mainly conducted along party political lines, and the dominance of Mapai and Ben-Gurion ensured that his actions would be approved by government and Knesset.

Who was right in this struggle? It seems clear that in the Hagana-regular army controversy Ben-Gurion's stand was exaggerated. While it is true that the Hagana officers had had no experience of sustained large-scale warfare, they were sufficiently open-minded and adaptable to learn from their continuing experience. And Ben-Gurion gave his trust to many of the ex-army officers because of his regard for the qualities of the British army; he rarely, if ever, examined their actual experience and qualifications. In the words of Meir Pa'il, an ex-Palmachnik turned military historian:

It appears that, had the war broken out some months . . . later, Ben-Gurion would have imposed the programme [suggested by a group of ex-army officers] on the Hagana, disbanded the formations of the Palmach and the Hagana, and replaced their senior officers by Jewish officers who had served under the British, and perhaps in other armies.

We may conjecture that fate was kind to the Zionist movement and the Yishuv, in that the war began at the end of 1947, and not later [when these plans could have been carried out].²¹

²⁰ The controversy about the disbanding of the Palmach is described, with conflicting interpretations, by Shapira, *The Army Controversy*; Gelber, *Why Was the Palmach Disbanded?*; id., *Jewish Army*, 231-42; Pa'il, *Emergence of Zahal*; id., *Palmach*, ch. 13; Kafkafi, *Truth or Faith*, 97-104; Peri, *Between Battles and Ballots*, 52-60.

²¹ 'Development of the Hagana', i. 269.

On the other hand, there was certainly some substance to Ben-Gurion's criticisms. In terms of bravery and devotion to duty those who fell in the attempt to reach the Etzion bloc and in the Yehiam convoy fully deserved their place in the Israeli pantheon. But analysis of the planning and execution of these operations, and of several other abortive convoys, reveals crucial errors which might well have been avoided: intelligence information was ignored, there were delays and carelessness in assembling and equipping the Israeli forces, the strength of the enemy was seriously underestimated, and the chain of command was often unclear.²² Many of these faults sprang from the tradition developed in the Hagana, and particularly in the Palmach, of reliance on the local commander, and their leaning towards improvisation rather than detailed planning. These tendencies had often succeeded brilliantly in the past, and would continue to do so in the course of the war, but they were not always appropriate. Further, it was claimed that the lack of battle drill in the Palmach training meant that most of its soldiers lacked the basic skills and instincts needed in a large-scale battle and led to unnecessary casualties. The conflict between Palmach officers and ex-officers of the British army over training methods was a major source of tension between the two groups.²³

With the rapid expansion of the IDF, the introduction of conscription, and the change in the social composition of the army resulting from mass immigration, severe problems of discipline began to emerge. Many of the attitudes and institutions to be found in most armies, but which the Hagana, and the Palmach within it, had deliberately eschewed—distinctive emblems for officers and NCOs, an emphasis on unquestioned discipline in training, saluting, and the establishment of a military police corps—were gradually introduced into the IDF. But there were more deeply rooted differences between the two schools of thought than could be resolved by imposing these relatively straightforward practices.

The assumption that soldiers are entitled, often even encouraged, to express their opinions, though obliged to obey orders when they are finally given, typified the Palmach at all levels. The opposite approach was well expressed by Haim Laskov, formerly a British army officer, when asked by Ben-Gurion what he would do if commanded to attack again—despite his own misgivings—after the first disastrous battle at Latrun. 'I replied that we would attack unquestioningly', recalled Laskov many years later. 'Yig'al Yadin thought that my reply showed a lack of

²² Milstein, *The War of Independence*, vol. iii, ch. 1, vol. iv, chs. 5–8.

²³ Gelber, *Jewish Army*, 165–72, 182–3, 204–7.

courage. In my view, he didn't understand what a real army is.²⁴ In many respects the Palmach was—and certainly aimed to be—what, to Laskov, was a contradiction in terms: a democratic army.

Among those who advocated the continued existence of the Palmach there was no generally accepted concept of what its future character should be. Some still spoke in terms of the partnership between the fighter and the worker, and intended to return to the Palmach's pre-war structure as nearly as possible; others spoke of it as a crack, selective fighting force, to be used for special operations and specialist military duties. Yet others saw the Palmach command as potentially responsible for the ground forces of the IDF, or the basis of its post-war development as a permanent conscript army. These latter concepts emphasized its fighting qualities rather than its social character. And, indeed, the basic tension between the two functions of the Palmach became apparent during the latter stages of the war: the pressure for new settlement—justified, in itself, on the grounds of 'settlement strategy'—led to ever greater demands for the release of groups of soldiers for this purpose, many of them among the most seasoned fighters of the Palmach.²⁵ Finally, the very nature of the Palmach's successful tactics on the field of battle threatened the source of manpower which had become, literally, its very lifeblood: its casualties were so high that many settlement groups lost their social coherence, and had to be disbanded; and these losses made the youth movements reluctant to continue sending their graduates to this heroic but exceedingly dangerous force.

Ben-Gurion's absolute veto on the continued existence of the Palmach prevented any serious consideration of the various suggestions for the future of the force. For, in the final analysis, the Palmach controversy was less about military or social questions than it was about power. It will be discussed in that context in the next chapter.

The Nahal

The disbanding of the Palmach high command was accompanied by the foundation of a new military formation—the Nahal (No'ar Halutzim Lohem: Pioneering and Fighting Youth), an attempt by Ben-Gurion to spike his critics' guns and build support within the kibbutz movement. The Nahal was mainly composed of 'nuclei' (*gar'inim*): groups of graduates of the pioneering youth movements who stayed together throughout

²⁴ Quoted in Gelber, *Why Was the Palmach Disbanded?*, 152–3.

²⁵ Kanari, *Hakibbutz Hameuchad*, 383–8; Shiran, 'Settlement Policy', 146–56.

their army service, and intended to found a new kibbutz or reinforce an existing one on demobilization. Part of their army service was devoted to military training, part to agricultural training and work on veteran kibbutzim, part to service in military outposts destined for eventual settlement, and part to purely military duties. Following the tradition of the Palmach, 15 per cent of their members were seconded to special military duties as NCOs and officers, and others to educational work in the youth movements from which they had originated.

Many aspects of the Nahal—the relatively informal relations between officers and men, the recruitment of men and women to each unit, the combination of military service and physical work, the special relationship with the youth movements and the kibbutz movements—were reminiscent of the Palmach. The historical circumstances make it clear that the Nahal was intended to be a substitute for the Palmach, though in a governmental and non-party framework. But there was one essential difference between them. The Palmach was first and foremost a fighting force, whose connection with the youth movements and the kibbutzim, while essential to its existence and special character, was ancillary to its military functions, whereas the prime object of the Nahal was the formation and preservation of settlement groups, despite the exigencies of military service.²⁶ The difference in emphasis and character between these two apparently similar formations was not only the result of Ben-Gurion's political moves; it also foreshadowed the transfer of attention in army and government from war to peace.

The Palmach was disbanded in November 1948. But Ben-Gurion had made the first move towards severing the link between the Palmach and the recruitment of youth movement members some five months earlier. In June 1948 all 17-year-old males were mobilized for training in the framework of the army's 'youth battalions' (Gadna: Gedudei Noar). This was a serious blow to the youth movements, the kibbutzim, and the Palmach alike: no provision was made for the release of youth movement leaders; the training given was purely military and not connected with any particular corps; and among those recruited were groups of youth movement graduates who had intended to found new kibbutzim after their service in the Palmach. Behind the scenes, however, an alternative was being prepared. At the end of June 1948 Elik Shomroni of kibbutz Afikim, one of the leading figures in the Netzah youth movement and a man of great organizational ability who was deeply loyal to Mapai and Ben-Gurion, joined the Ministry of Defence. With the concurrence of

²⁶ Kafkafi, *Truth or Faith*, 107–8; Shiran, 'Settlement Policy', 200–2.

Ben-Gurion and the youth movements not connected with Mapam, Shomroni sketched out a plan for the creation of the Nahal. It was accepted in principle by Ben-Gurion in August, given official approval in September, and put into operation in the following month, at just the same time as the final stage of the break-up of the Palmach.²⁷

The public controversy about the Nahal accompanied that about the Palmach, and followed very similar lines. Its advocates saw in it a way of continuing the traditions of the Palmach, and ensuring the interests of the youth and kibbutz movements. Its opponents criticized the new corps on the grounds that it was subject to the regulations and spirit of the army, demanded too much military activity as against work in the kibbutzim, and abandoned any pretension to the egalitarianism of the Palmach. Behind all these arguments, as in the case of the Palmach itself, was the basic political struggle between Mapai and Mapam. The balance of forces in the state made the result a foregone conclusion. But it was not until 1950 that the youth movements controlled by Mapam reconciled themselves to the new situation, and began to organize groups of their graduates for service in the Nahal.²⁸

THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE AND THE ARAB REFUGEES

The flight of the Palestinian Arabs began with the start of the fighting, in December 1947. The first to leave were middle- and upper-class families from the towns, who no doubt intended to return after the war. Their exit led to the demoralization of wide sections of the populace, and prompted the evacuation of a number of villages and urban neighbourhoods—particularly those situated near the firing-line, in the hinterland of the major towns, and in the areas with a local Jewish majority. This process reached its climax with the evacuation of the Arabs of Tiberias, Haifa, and Jaffa in April 1947 (in Haifa against the advice of the Hagana and the local Jewish community). During the same month several Arab villages were occupied by combat units of the Hagana and their inhabitants fled or were evicted,²⁹ and the IZL carried out the massacre in Deir Yassin.

In the first stage of the war the mass flight of Palestinian Arabs was unexpected and, in the eyes of most Israelis, undesirable. The situation

²⁷ Keren, *The Plow and the Sword*, 84–96.

²⁸ *Ibid.* 98–114.

²⁹ Kastel and Kolonia, near Jerusalem; Salame and Yazur, close to Tel Aviv; Abu-Shusha, in the neighbourhood of Mishmar Ha'emek.

began to change in April and May 1948, with the preparations for and resistance to the invasion of Arab armies from outside the country. 'Plan D', the Hagana's operational plan which aimed at clearing lines of communication and border areas, took into account the fact that many Arab villages harboured irregular forces which were harassing convoys and Israeli villages, and were liable to offer hospitality to the invading forces. It provided for the occupation and, where necessary, the forcible evacuation of strategically placed villages. Its implementation during the second and third stages of the war (April-June 1948) combined with the Israeli army's victories in the field to spread demoralization among Arabs close to the front line and further increase the number of refugees.

By the end of June the 'refugee problem' was an important item on the national agenda. Gradually it came to be realized that, in contrast to virtually all pre-war predictions, a Jewish state largely free of Arabs was a practical possibility. Over the coming months Israeli policy crystallized, despite a good deal of political and humanitarian opposition, on the lines formulated by Ben-Gurion in May 1948: the Jews should treat the remaining Arabs with 'civil and human equality', but 'it is not our job to worry about the return [of those who have fled]'.³⁰

The compulsory evacuation and destruction of villages on military grounds led to a certain backlash, and in July an army order was issued which forbade the destruction of Arab property, except in battle, without specific permission from the defence minister.³¹ But there is much evidence of increasing heavy-handedness, on an unofficial level, in the Israelis' dealings with the Arabs: expulsions, 'nudging' of villagers to leave voluntarily, 'whispering propaganda' designed to spread panic, and even some atrocities.³² The more blatant acts were officially condemned and punished. But there is no doubt that the controlling element in the Israeli administration, civil and military, approved of the reduction of the number of Arabs in Israeli territory, sometimes even by quite brutal means. The newly founded state was still engaged in a ferocious war, with no certainty that its victories would be permanent, and a large Arab minority within Israeli territory would constitute a very serious military danger. And, just as the Arabs could remember Deir Yassin, the Jews could remember the slaughter of the Jews of Hebron in 1929, and of the defenders of Kfar Etzion in 1948.

As is natural in any war, and even more in an army with little battle experience or tradition of command, there was a good deal of confusion,

³⁰ Rivlin and Oren, *Ben-Gurion's War Diary*, 1 May 1948, quoted in Morris, *Palestinian Refugee Problem*, 133.

³¹ See *ibid.* 198.

³² *Ibid.*, chs. 6-8.

some of it resulting from lack of a clear policy, some from the gap between the humane sentiments of official policy and its execution in the field. In some areas, notably the south, the advancing Israeli army ensured that there were virtually no Arabs in its rear, with the exception of several thousand Bedouin. In others, notably in Western and Central Galilee, a great many towns and villages—particularly of non-Muslim Arabs—remained untouched, and formed the basis of the present-day Israeli Arab community. Another area of Arab settlement within Israel, in the Wadi Ara, south of Afuleh, and to the east of the Hefer valley, was created in April 1949 after the evacuation of the Iraqi army, under the conditions of the ceasefire settlement with Jordan. By the end of 1948, when it was becoming clear that Israel's borders, long and vulnerable as they were, would be a focus of hostility for many years, the army was authorized to evacuate Arab villages within 15 kilometres of the borders. Thus by mid-1949 the geographic shape of Israel, with an Arab minority of about 170,000, was more or less stabilized. In the course of the war some 600,000 to 700,000 Arabs had become refugees—roughly the same number as the size of the Jewish population of Israel at the time of its establishment.³³

A vast amount of abandoned property remained in the wake of the flight of the refugees. Some villages were destroyed almost immediately, in order to prevent their being used in the fighting. Others, especially in border areas, were demolished so that their inhabitants would not be tempted to return. Abandoned buildings in the towns were used to house the waves of immigrants who poured into the state from the time of its establishment. From the end of 1948 this policy was applied to the rural sector, and some forty-five immigrant settlements were housed in abandoned Arab villages.³⁴

From July 1948 the Arab population which remained within the bounds of the state was administered by the military government. Until it was disbanded in 1966 this body supervised most aspects of the life of the Israeli Arabs, whose numbers doubled during this period. In the time of uncertainty between the British evacuation and the establishment of clear modes of administration, there was much confusion over the status of abandoned property, and many cases of looting: abandoned property was formally the responsibility of the Custodian of Enemy Property, an official of the Finance Ministry, but his department suffered from a severe shortage of manpower, and was far from being able to exercise

³³ *Morris, Palestinian Refugee Problem*, 297–8; Nimrod, 'Israeli-Arab Relations', ii, 277–85.

³⁴ Bein and Perlmann, *Immigration and Settlement*, 79–81.

complete control.³⁶ According to a law passed in November 1949 any Arab who had left his home after 29 November 1947 was deemed to have abandoned his property, which henceforth belonged to the state, and was administered by the office of the custodian. After the end of the fighting, many of those who had fled during the war attempted to return to their former homes. Any increase in the number of Arabs in the state was considered a potential threat to its security, and the military authorities resisted almost all these attempts very firmly. Those who were caught were defined as infiltrators, and returned across the border.

The Kibbutzim and the Flight of the Arabs

In the period before the outbreak of hostilities, and even during the first stages of the war, many of the kibbutzim tried to preserve the peaceful relationships with their neighbours which had developed over the years. In the autumn and winter of 1947 several meetings were held between the settlers in the central coastal plain—an area with a Jewish majority, designated as part of the Jewish state by the UNSCOP report—and representatives of the Arab villages in the area. At this stage it seemed likely that the Palestinian Arabs would accept the partition settlement and dissociate themselves from the aggressive policies of the Husseini faction, which was for outright war against the Zionist enterprise.³⁶ As the war spread and became more intense, this seemed ever less possible. The invading Arab armies persuaded or forced local villagers to give them logistic support and, in many cases, to participate in the fighting. They also actually ordered the evacuation of a number of villages, to prevent their inhabitants hindering military operations.³⁷ Such incidents, as well as the objective difficulties of fighting a war in the midst of a potentially hostile population, brought about a gradual change in the attitudes of many who had at first been in favour of friendship and conciliation. The function of the liaison officers between the kibbutzim and their neighbours often changed: instead of attempting to ensure peaceful co-existence, they played an active part in the 'whispering propaganda' designed to encourage the evacuation of villages in the rear of the Israeli army, and openly advised the inhabitants to leave so as not to be involved in the coming battle.³⁸

This is an early example of a change in attitude which took place as

³⁶ Shafrir, *Life's Furrows*, ch. 9.

³⁶ Morris, *Palestinian Refugee Problem*, 36–40.

³⁷ Nimrod, 'Israeli-Arab Relations', ii. 261–2.

³⁸ On 'whispering propaganda' in Upper Galilee see Allon, 'Operation Yiftah', 286. Allon was commander of the Palmach in the area in the early stages of the war.

the war progressed, both on the policy-making level and in the field: regret at the Arab exodus was followed by acceptance of the fact, and then by active measures to encourage the process. A similar progression can be seen in the matter of the destruction of Arab villages. The first cases occurred during the battle for Jerusalem, as a vital tactical measure. Later, a lull in the fighting was used to destroy whole groups of villages which were perceived as a source of permanent danger, since their inhabitants had joined in the fighting. In some cases, which apparently included Mishmar Ha'emek and Hulda, this was done at the request of those responsible for the defence of the neighbouring kibbutzim, and sometimes with their help.³⁹

As this practice gelled into a policy aimed at permanently preventing the return of the refugees it aroused political protest, particularly on the part of the Hashomer Hatzair section of Mapam. Over the coming year its representatives, together with the minister of agriculture (Aharon Tzislung of kibbutz Ein Harod, a leading member of the Ahdut Ha'avoda section of Mapam), constantly raised questions of Arab rights in the cabinet. The critics of the government's policy—or, more exactly, that of the Defence Ministry under Ben-Gurion—distinguished between destruction in the heat of battle and that executed 'in cold blood, out of political calculation'.⁴⁰ Their pressure led to an order forbidding such acts, except with Ben-Gurion's explicit permission. But both his official guidelines and the policy from which they stemmed, frequently expressed in hints and off-the-record remarks, were clear, and were executed forcibly. Mapam was politically weak, and could not overcome either the military authorities' arguments—often fully justified—or the executive power of Ben-Gurion and his allies. It may also be, as some scholars maintain, that Israel Galili's reluctance to use 'aggressive defence measures', including expulsion and destruction, was one of Ben-Gurion's prime motives in dismissing him from the high command.⁴¹ If so, this is another instance of the weakness of the pacific-minded opposition.

Among Ben-Gurion's allies must be counted not only his own party, Mapai, and the bulk of the military establishment, but also the great majority of Ahdut Ha'avoda. Their alliance with Hashomer Hatzair in the recently established Mapam had not changed their activist outlook. They believed that an Arab minority within the State of Israel would

³⁹ Morris, *Palestinian Refugee Problem*, 116, 157–9.

⁴⁰ Tzislung in government meeting, 20 June 1948. Tzislung's personal archive, Kibbutz Me'uhad archives, 9/9/1.

⁴¹ Nimrod, 'Israeli-Arab Relations', ii. 273–5.

constitute a permanent security risk, and that consideration for the enemy in the course of a mortal struggle was unwarranted sentimentality. One of the most outspoken advocates of this view was Benny Marshak, the education officer of the Palmach.⁴²

Politically, therefore, neither the kibbutz movement, nor even the kibbutz-controlled party, Mapam, spoke with one voice on this issue. The *de facto* policy of expulsion and destruction was supported by Hever Hakvutzot and the great majority of the Kibbutz Me'uhad, of whatever political complexion, and opposed by the Kibbutz Artzi and a small minority in the Kibbutz Me'uhad.

It would be wrong to categorize the protests of Tzising and others as purely political. They were largely motivated by a degree of moral indignation, expressed at the level of the individual kibbutz or kibbutz member. Events such as the expulsion of peaceful Arab neighbours, or the destruction of villages, reached the politicians through information provided by eyewitnesses, very often kibbutz members, in the army or the neighbourhood. The change in the public atmosphere, and in unofficial government policy, created bewilderment among the security officers of many kibbutzim, who had for years attempted to foster good relations with their neighbours. Letters to their superior officers, and reminiscences from later years, show that they saw the change of line as a deterioration in moral standards. In July 1948 a security officer in the Jordan valley, one of the founders of kibbutz Ma'oz Haim, wrote:

Recently the view has come to prevail that the Arabs are nothing. 'All Arabs are murderers . . . we should burn all their villages . . .' and so forth. You can hear such things from Palmachniks, men of the Hagana . . . General Zionists, Mapainiks, Mapamniks—even former Communists. I am not prepared to defend the Arabs. But I do think we must defend the Jewish people against extremism and exaggeration.⁴³

In many cases there was no objection on the part of such people to the expulsion of hostile Arab villagers, or the destruction of their property. But there were a number of incidents in which friendly villages, some of which had even had formal 'non-aggression agreements' with the Hagana dating from before the war, were attacked, evacuated, and destroyed. The best known of these is Deir Yassin, the attack on which was almost

⁴² Morris, *Palestinian Refugee Problem*, 167.

⁴³ Letter to Ezra Danin, 29 July 1948, quoted in Nimrod, 'Israeli-Arab Relations', ii. 293-4. There is a partial translation in Morris, *Palestinian Refugee Problem*, 167. Further examples of similar protests are quoted in Nimrod, 'Israeli-Arab Relations', ii. 295, and Morris, *Palestinian Refugee Problem*, 167-9.

certainly a deliberate political attempt by the IZL to widen the range of Arab-Jewish hostilities, and was very widely condemned by the Jews. Sometimes, too, Arab villagers were evacuated by the military authorities in the course of the war, despite their history of co-operation with the Jewish settlements in the area and their declarations of friendship. In a number of such cases the local liaison officers protested to the central authorities, but usually to little effect. Such protests came from kibbutzim of all political complexions. But so did support, and even help, for the destruction of villages with a history of enmity towards Jewish settlement.⁴⁴ And, as it became clear that there was a real possibility that those who had fled would not return, there began a scramble on the part of their Jewish neighbours—*moshavot*, *moshavim*, and *kibbutzim*—to harvest their crops and cultivate their fields, in the hope of acquiring the abandoned lands permanently.

It is not surprising that the Palmach, which bore the brunt of the fighting in the early stages of the war, initiated the policy of destroying villages which had formed bases for hostile operations. Moshe Carmel of Na'an (Kibbutz Me'uhad), adopted this tactic early in the war, even before it had become accepted practice. And throughout the war Yig'al Allon of Ginossar (Kibbutz Me'uhad) made very successful use of a variety of methods to encourage the evacuation of the civilian population.⁴⁵ Shimon Avidan of kibbutz Ein Hashofet (Hashomer Hatzair) said in a newspaper interview: 'Even when we conquer villages and blow up houses, we do not forget that we shall have to live with our Arab neighbours in this land.'⁴⁶ But there is no evidence that his policy in the field was in any way different from Allon's.⁴⁷ Whatever the ideological predilections of the commanders in the field, military considerations were their prime concern, and these dictated the general line: the fewer Arabs, the better. The exceptions to this rule, as a result of which a sub-

⁴⁴ *Protests against destruction of villages.* By Mapam (Ariq, Zarnuqa): Morris, *Palestinian Refugee Problem*, 126-7; by kibbutz Sha'ar Ha'amakim of Mapam (Zubeidat): *ibid.* 166-7; by kibbutzim Dorot and Nir Am of Mapai and Ruhama of Mapam (Huj and Bedouin in the Negev): *ibid.* 167, 215; by kibbutz Kfar Gil'adi of Mapai (Hunin): Nimrod, 'Israeli-Arab Relations', ii. 295. *Support for destruction of villages.* By kibbutz Ma'ayan Baruch of Mapai: Nimrod, 'Israeli-Arab Relations', ii. 295; by kibbutzim Mishmar Ha'emek, Ein Hashofet, and Ramat Hashofet of Mapam: Weitz, *My Diary*, iii. 47, 272-3; by kibbutzim Dalia and Ein Hashofet of Mapam: Nimrod, 'Israeli-Arab Relations', ii. 92-6.

⁴⁵ See Nimrod, 'Israeli-Arab Relations', ii. 269; Morris, *Palestinian Refugee Problem*, 122, 217, 219, 244-6, and, summing up Allon's operations, 289, 293.

⁴⁶ *Al Hamishmar*, 20 June 1948, quoted in Nimrod, 'Israeli-Arab Relations', ii. 286.

⁴⁷ See e.g. Morris, *Palestinian Refugee Problem*, 125-8, 212.

stantial number of Arabs remained in the Jewish state, were mainly in Galilee in the later stages of the war. They apparently stemmed from the greater reluctance of the local Arabs to move, from the less aggressive (and less consistent) policy of Moshe Carmel, the commander of the area, and from the authorities' greater consideration for the Christian communities.

These tragic events are reflected in some kibbutz members' reactions to the expulsion of the civilian population of Lydda after the town's surrender. A vivid description of the event, detailing the suffering of the refugees and in one case comparing them with the Jews exiled after the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans, was published in the periodicals of the Kibbutz Me'uhad. But the author, who was personally concerned in the negotiations which led to the evacuation, did not suggest any operative conclusions.⁴⁸ Here again, military considerations were regarded as paramount. Moreover, though Hashomer Hatzair's political leaders were exceedingly unhappy with the turn of events, they too were restrained by their reluctance to harm the war effort: overt criticism of the army's judgement and humanity might well be exploited by hostile propagandists. The criticism was mainly voiced in the government rather than the Knesset, and in closed meetings of the party or the kibbutz movement.⁴⁹ It should, however, be added that there were occasions when it was effective. One was the outcry against atrocities against Arab civilians discussed in the cabinet in November 1948, which forced Ben-Gurion to abandon his practice of automatically defending the army and covering up its less creditable acts. The result was the punishment of those responsible, and explicit orders forbidding the repetition of such acts.⁵⁰

Politics, Morality, and War

For the Israelis, the War of Independence was a total war. Whatever the actual balance of forces,⁵¹ they believed themselves outnumbered by peoples and armies who had in the past displayed the utmost cruelty and hatred towards the Yishuv. The Israelis' basic attitudes were coloured by their past experiences: most of the leading figures in the Hagana and the IDF, of whatever political persuasion, had spent much of their adult life

⁴⁸ Guttman, 'Lydda Goes into Exile'.

⁴⁹ For example Ya'ari's reactions to the evacuation of Lydda. Morris, *Palestinian Refugee Problem*, 211 and n. 41.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 228-34.

⁵¹ Some scholars have claimed that for most of the war the Israeli forces were superior to their enemies in numbers and equipment. Morris, *1948 and After*, 13-16.

in a situation of basic hostility between Jew and Arab; many of the soldiers had themselves been refugees; and all were conscious of the fact that Israel aspired to be a home for the uprooted of the world war and the Holocaust. It is little wonder, therefore, that the minority who before the war had been active in promoting a peaceful Jewish-Arab accommodation became ever more isolated, and themselves tended to lose faith.

It is against this background that the actions of the kibbutz movement should be seen. On the local level, the desire to maintain relationships with Arab neighbours was undoubtedly sincere, and had led to many genuine friendships in time of peace. But with the worsening in the political atmosphere whole communities became hostile. Such relationships as those of the people of Hulda with their Arab neighbours⁵² did not survive the events of 1936-9, when Arab Hulda became a centre for enemy activity. It was unlikely that Jews, however enlightened, would forget the lessons of the pogroms in Europe—and in Palestine in 1921 and 1929—when apparent friends had turned literally overnight into murderous enemies; and such predispositions were reinforced when, as in Mishmar Ha'emek and Hulda, the defenders of the kibbutz saw their neighbours giving passive and active aid to the Arab forces.

Thus, the overwhelming reaction to the flight of the Palestinian Arabs on the local level was relief at liberation from a situation at best uncomfortable, and at worst threatening. This hardened into approval of the new circumstances, and often into active steps to ensure that the refugees would not return. One of these was the gradual assumption of control over abandoned lands. At first this was an emergency measure, to ensure the food supply of a besieged nation; later, it became part of an official settlement policy which assumed—and ensured—that the refugees would never reoccupy their land.

On the political level, this was neither surprising nor undesirable in the eyes of the majority of the kibbutz movement, nor of the country as a whole. Neither the Kibbutz Me'uhad nor Hever Hakvutzot believed in the possibility of an accommodation with the Arabs, except as a result of their defeat in the war. This did not mean that their members were not sensitive to the horrors of war or to the sufferings of the civilian population. But their desire for humane treatment of the enemy, and their appeals for consideration for those Arab communities which had displayed real friendship for the Jews, did not reach out beyond the

⁵² See *KM* i. 304-5.

local or personal dimension. The predominant approach was 'à la guerre comme à la guerre', a phrase frequently quoted in the discussions of the time.

The Kibbutz Me'uhad and Hever Hakvutzot were reasonably satisfied with the territorial outcome of the war, though the leaders of the Kibbutz Me'uhad would have preferred the conquest of all western Palestine. The Kibbutz Artzi had abandoned the idea of a binational state as an immediate aim, but its basic approach was expressed in frequent protests against dispossession of Arabs. There was, however, a clear contrast between this official stance and the way in which the movement's kibbutzim handled the question in practical terms. Joseph Weitz of the Jewish National Fund, one of the main proponents of permanent, demonstrative, and legalized seizure of Arab land, is undoubtedly a hostile witness on this issue. But there was a large measure of truth in his comments in June 1948, on witnessing the destruction of an Arab village:

to my surprise I felt neither regret nor hatred . . . that is the way of the world. . . . We simply want to live, and those who lived in these clay houses did not want us to exist here—they wanted not only to conquer us, but to destroy us. Interestingly enough, that is what all our soldiers think—throughout the whole [political] spectrum. If there are any doubts in the matter, they are those of certain party leaders [i.e. Mapam], who know how to exercise their power of dialectic.⁶³

The policy of expropriation was indeed widely accepted by the vast majority of the Yishuv, including most of the members of the Kibbutz Artzi. The protests of the movement's leaders became progressively weaker as it became clear that the refugees were unlikely to return; and, meanwhile, many kibbutzim, including those of some of its most prominent spokesmen, were engaged in completing the destruction of abandoned villages and appropriating their land.⁶⁴

In other respects, however, the Kibbutz Artzi continued its humanistic tradition. From the first, its leaders proposed to accept Israeli Arabs into the political system, including their own party, Mapam. And they were firmly opposed to the system of military government, which restricted the movements and other rights of the Arab population for many years.

Kibbutz members reacted to the war and its consequences in ways very similar to those of the Israeli public in general. While conscious of

⁶³ *My Diary*, iii. 303.

⁶⁴ Morris, *1948 and After*, ch. 2.

the sufferings of the Arab population, they believed them to be the result of an unavoidable clash of interests. In time of war and in peacetime national emergency, they gave almost absolute precedence to considerations of security.

6

Economics, Settlement, and Politics, *1947-1949*

ECONOMICS

THE following extract is from the special daily news bulletin of Mishmar Ha'emek, issued during the early stages of the war, two months before the major battle for the kibbutz:

25 February 1948

[When the fighting broke out] one of the soldiers in the Hagana unit stationed in the kibbutz was sent to help the workers who were mowing and loading fodder for the cows to retreat in good order. Returning breathless to his unit he reported 'My first task was to persuade the workers to return home at once. After a vociferous argument I was forced to agree to their loading two more pitchforks of fodder each' . . . They returned home safely under fire—running, crawling, and jumping.

The farm horses returned home by themselves, and R. managed to secure them in their places, except one, which had to be left tethered to its cart because the barn came under heavy fire. It is to be hoped that he kept calm, and we shall have a reunion after the battle.

Since the electricity was cut off the milking has been done by hand, and anybody with the slightest knowledge and ability is mobilized to the work. All the cows have been evacuated to a place of safety, except for one calf, which was wounded in the rear; the dairymen who tried to rescue her came under heavy fire and were forced to retreat.¹

27 February 1948

06.00: All available forces are mobilized to dig trenches.

07.00-08.00: Two wagonloads of fodder are mown and brought home safely.

08.30: Heavy firing from the neighbouring villages.

08.45: Despite shots from all directions, digging continues. A great many of the workers are women.

09.45: A third wagon with two fodder workers is sent out as an experiment. Heavy firing. They are 'stuck' in the field.

10.00: The 'guinea-pigs' return under the protection of an armoured car, without the fodder.

¹ *Al Mishmar Ha'emek*, mimeo (Heb.), 1st issue, p. 2 [n.d., but c.26 Feb. 1948].

The War of Independence was the ultimate test of the strength of the kibbutzim, in the economic sense no less than the social and military. Called on to supply the needs of the Yishuv in its hour of danger, they did their duty bravely, attempting to carry on production even under fire. But the exigencies of war created a number of dilemmas both for the kibbutzim themselves and for the policy-makers of the Yishuv and the young state.

The preparations for the termination of the Mandate led to a virtual collapse of the administration, shortage of raw materials, and lack of foreign currency. Some of the branches which had been built up over the previous years in order to ensure the Yishuv's independent food supply were particularly badly hit by the siege conditions of this period. For instance, some 1,500 head of cattle were evacuated to safe areas, but the inferior conditions in their temporary homes and shortage of fodder led to a very serious fall in milk production. The poultry branch suffered similar problems, and the difficulty of ensuring a constant water supply and daily care reduced the yield of vegetables. The agricultural sector managed to supply only some 50 per cent of the needs of the country during this period; but this, taken together with consumption of reserve supplies, was enough to ensure that there was no severe food shortage during the war, except in special cases such as the siege of Jerusalem.² In May 1948 came the beginning of mass immigration, which put any attempt at immediate self-sufficiency out of the question. In the first year of the state's existence local farmers supplied only some 15 per cent of the country's food supplies; the rest, including products such as grain, dried milk and eggs, and processed fish had to be imported.³

The kibbutzim did not have to bear the financial burden of their war effort alone. In the early days of the war, when they had to lay in iron rations, dig trenches, and turn their vehicles into armoured cars, they were helped by a special emergency fund provided by the Jewish Agency. However, this helped to cover only the direct costs of equipment, and was far from compensating for loss of income from cessation of work, evacuation of civilians, and the like. Similarly, the direct damage to kibbutzim and moshavim as the result of enemy action during the war was estimated at £14 million, about a quarter of their audited property. They received only £11.5 million from the government as compensation for these losses.⁴

² *UAW Report* (1949), 60-1.

³ Gvati, *A Century of Settlement*, ii. 21-2.

⁴ Shatil, *Economy*, 257.

Problems of Manpower

The War of Independence began before the establishment of the state, and so did the mobilization of forces in the Yishuv. The kibbutzim had a higher proportion of men and women of military age than did other sectors of the Jewish community. However, from an early stage the authorities recognized that the kibbutzim and moshavim had special responsibilities both in defence and in production, and that—in contrast to much of the urban population—every kibbutz member was automatically a member of the Hagana, and would play a part in the defence of his home if necessary. Each kibbutz was required to provide a quota of 7 per cent of those of suitable age to the army; exemption was granted only to eighteen border kibbutzim, and to those with fewer than twenty-five members (which included almost all the kibbutzim in the Negev). In all, the number demanded was 1,870, but almost 2,000 joined the armed services. With the establishment of the state and the regulation of the recruiting system this special quota was abolished, and kibbutz members were called up, like the rest of the population, according to their age.⁵

This process led to a great deal of tension within the kibbutzim, and between them and the recruiting authorities: many of their members were accustomed to the belief that they were 'mobilized for life', and that their very presence in the kibbutz, and readiness to defend it, constituted a sufficient contribution to the security of the state. In many respects this feeling was justified, but it sometimes led to unjustified conclusions. In March 1948, when the first stage of the war was about to reach its height, Joseph Yizre'eli of kibbutz Afikim, one of Ben-Gurion's senior aides, said in a meeting of Mapai:

I can hold my own against the argument that immigrant youth has to have a sound education, and this takes at least a year and a half [during which they should not be recruited to the army]; and I can hold my own against a man who tells me, almost with tears in his eyes, that he has built up a choir, and if we take away the clarinet player and the bass there won't be a choir any more . . . and don't think that this is the only such case. Hundreds of people are like that. . . . They're not draft-dodgers. But this is the sector we have to recruit from. . . .

You can deal with these questions only if you have a heart of stone. . . . They come from Upper Galilee and tell me that without an extra 500 men they won't be able to hold out. Gvati [of the Histadrut's Agricultural Centre] tells me that

⁵ Dinur, *Hagana*, iii. 1461.

the agricultural economy is being destroyed, we have to send more workers immediately.⁶

The urgency of Yizre'eli's task stemmed from the fact that the war was entering a new and critical phase, when the army required all the resources that could be mustered for the front. But there was also some justification for those who resisted his efforts: this was after the battles of Mishmar Ha'emek and Degania, whose members had played an important part in the military operations, and similar trials of strength could be expected to occur—as, in fact, they did over the coming year.

After the danger had passed these settlements returned to the routine of agricultural production: they felt that they had made their contribution on the field of battle, and were now playing an equally vital role in providing food for the beleaguered state. Even so, the recruitment authorities laid a further burden on them by mobilizing groups of members for periods of several months in order to man fortified points just behind the front line while the regular army was reorganizing or taking part in active operations. But there were many, particularly in the younger generation, who considered this insufficient: a great many young people in both kibbutzim and moshavim ignored their official exemption from call-up and volunteered for active service, often defying the decisions of their own communities.⁷ The dilemmas inherent in the situation were reflected in the consciousness of the ordinary kibbutz member.⁸

No less critical to the kibbutz movement was the question of reserves for new settlement. These were to be found in four formations: 'training groups' of the local youth movements, most of them located in kibbutzim and preparing to join the Palmach; the 'kibbutzim' (*plugot*) in the *moshavot*, organized communally, living on their work as hired labourers, and waiting until they were allocated land for final settlement; members of Youth Aliya groups of various ages, still in the process of acclimatiza-

⁶ Meeting at Mapai secretariat, 18 Mar. 1948; repr. in Avizohar and Bareli, *Now or Never*, 344. In June 1948 leaders of the kibbutz movement claimed that the kibbutzim were discriminated against in the allocation of arms, money for fortifications, and manpower. It was also claimed that at this point 25-30% of the kibbutz population, and 50-60% of the males, were mobilized outside their homes, as against 15-20% of the population as a whole. Shiran, 'Settlement Policy', 114, 277 n. 6.

⁷ *UAW Report* (1949), 35-6, and verbal evidence of Assaf Agin, May 1994.

⁸ None the less, the resistance of many kibbutzim to the immediate demands of the recruiting authorities was sometimes regarded as refusal to volunteer for important tasks. Ben-Gurion castigated it as such in his famous 'humiliated and ashamed' speech of 1950, quoted in Ch. 7 below.

tion and education in veteran kibbutzim; and groups of new immigrants formed in the European youth movements or in the Cyprus camps, who saw themselves as nuclei of new kibbutzim. In the early, pre-state period the recruiting authorities, spurred on by the need to prepare the greatest possible reserves of manpower for the testing time to come, pressed hard to recruit these groups into the overall military framework. The kibbutz movements resisted this pressure, justifying their stand by the contention that agricultural settlement—particularly the foundation of kibbutzim by Palmach groups—was essential to the security of the state. While this concept was never seriously challenged, the manpower branch of the army's General Staff tended to stress the immediate need for maximum mobilization. The resistance to the grant of special privileges to such categories as youth movement graduates was based on the argument that these were élite groups, whose capabilities and skills should be developed for the benefit of the military machine as a whole. For instance, a high proportion of youth movement graduates were thought to be officer material, but were unable to fulfil this function as long as they stayed with their comrades in the settlement group.⁹

In most cases the debate was resolved by a compromise between the demands of the military establishment and those of the settlement movements. The 'training groups', composed of graduates of the local youth movements, were given special consideration on their mobilization to the Palmach: they trained and fought as a group, thus preserving their social coherence. A percentage of their members was taken from them for officers' courses and other specialized training; and each group was allowed to send some of its members to work in the youth movements in town, in order to preserve the educational framework which would ensure continued recruitment to the Palmach (later, the Nahal). A similar arrangement was made for the sixty working groups already in the *moshavot* at the beginning of the war. As for the Youth Aliya groups, before 1948 each had spent a period of at least two years of education and training at a veteran kibbutz before making up groups for settlement. Now this period was gradually shortened to nine months; but Youth Aliya graduates were drafted into the army as consolidated groups, first into the Palmach and later into the formations which eventually became the Nahal. The only sizeable category of potential settlers which did not enjoy special consideration of this kind consisted of the groups of immigrant youth which had combined in 'kibbutzim' on the way to Palestine. Until a late stage of the war, these groups were assimilated into the army as individuals, and

⁹ Shiran, 'Settlement Policy', pt. 3.

thus lost the collective identity which would have enabled them to set up new kibbutzim on their release.¹⁰

It should be emphasized, however, that the debate about manpower priorities took place against the background of a general consensus that agricultural settlement was of prime, if not paramount, importance not only from the political point of view, but also as a vital element in the state's defence dispositions. This attitude was overridden only for a very short period, in the spring of 1948, when it looked as though the very existence of the Yishuv was threatened by the Arab forces. At this point even Joseph Weitz, the chief executive officer of the Jewish National Fund and a tireless and fanatical advocate of agricultural settlement, wrote in his diary:

The plan for settling two hundred new villages is pure rhetoric. Even I am aware of the fact that there are no people and no arms, and just now it is the rifle and machine-gun that will be decisive, not the point of settlement. Adding settlements will weaken our military situation. The order of the day is to strengthen what already exists, with fortifications, weapons and food.¹¹

But this was only a passing phase. Virtually throughout the war, Weitz and others in what may be called the settlement lobby were active in promoting the view that settlement and defence were largely congruent, if not entirely synonymous, terms. It was, therefore, necessary to free manpower for settlement, even at the expense of immediate military needs. The tension between this principle and the constant pressure of the army for reinforcements led to the compromises described above.

The tense manpower situation of the kibbutzim was eased somewhat in October 1948 with the formation of the Nahal. The Nahal units not only prevented the disintegration of settlement groups formed in the youth movements by keeping them together during their army service; they also helped the veteran kibbutzim, in which they served for various periods of agricultural training. But this in itself was only a palliative in a situation which strained the system to the utmost.

Land

The flight of the Arabs left large areas of land uncultivated. In the spring and summer of 1948, under the pressure of a national shortage of food and uncertainty about the coming year's crop, farmers of all sorts—from kibbutzim, moshavim, and *moshavot*—began to harvest their absent

¹⁰ Shiran, 'Settlement Policy', 112-62.

¹¹ Weitz's diary, 21 Mar. 1948, quoted in Shiran, 'Settlement Policy', 65-6.

neighbours' land. The Ministry of Agriculture encouraged this process as being crucial to the war effort. In several areas it was carried out co-operatively by the settlements organized in 'district blocs', the Jewish organs of pre-state local government, in others at the initiative of the settlers themselves. The produce was declared government property, but in the chaotic conditions then existing it was not always paid for. As it gradually became clear that the refugees were unlikely to return, the situation was regularized, though not without a good many bureaucratic snags and some wrangling between those who stood to benefit from the extension of their lands. Abandoned land was eventually declared government property, and sold to the Jewish National Fund, which leased it to new and existing settlements; at first for one year only, later for forty-nine or ninety-nine years, on terms similar to those which had become customary over the previous forty years of Zionist settlement.¹²

The political misgivings which accompanied the destruction of the Arab villages were expressed in this context, too, especially by the Hashomer Hatzair wing of Mapam. In the first instance a compromise formula was reached whereby 'surplus land' would be set aside for returning refugees: the Jewish settlers could afford to forgo it, since they would use intensive methods of cultivation on the remaining area. By the end of 1948 the hardening national consensus against the return of the refugees made it possible to allocate land without ensuring reserves for possible returnees.¹³ The Kibbutz Artzi, no less than the other kibbutz movements, recognized the importance of strategic settlement on the borders—including, in some cases, on sites whose inhabitants had been forcibly evacuated.¹⁴ And the existing kibbutzim, many of which had been starved of land for many years, took the opportunity to increase their holdings: Hanita, for instance, eventually received 2,900 dunams of land instead of the 50 which it had had before the war.¹⁵ The process was accompanied by a number of disputes between settlements of all types, and the final arrangement was often a result of political pressure rather than considerations of equity. But by 1950 the holdings of existing

¹² There were already some 1.4 million dunams of abandoned land by the first ceasefire on 11 June 1948. Golan, 'Abandoned Arab Lands', 410.

¹³ *Ibid.* 429-34.

¹⁴ For instance in Sasa and Bar'am on the Lebanese border, both founded by graduates of the Hashomer Hatzair movement. The inhabitants of Bar'am were promised that they would be allowed to return to their land after the end of the state of emergency—a promise which had still not been fulfilled forty-five years later.

¹⁵ Rayman, *The Kibbutz Community*, 93.

TABLE 6.1 Land holdings of kibbutzim and moshavim, 1947-52 (dunams)

Year	Kibbutzim			Moshavim		
	Established ^a	New	Total	Established ^a	New	Total
1947	468,622	—	468,622	190,495	—	190,495
1949	863,485	264,852	1,128,337	239,277	41,230	280,607
1952	1,162,682	341,060	1,503,742	438,976	523,629	962,605

Source: *UAW Report* (1955), 50.

^a Settled before the establishment of the state.

settlements had been regularized, and the control of abandoned lands which now formed a reserve for future settlement established.

By 1952 the allocation and redistribution of land had fixed the basic pattern of land ownership. The changes which took place during the war years and their aftermath are reflected both in the development of new settlements and in the vastly increased size of the holdings of kibbutzim and moshavim alike (see Table 6.1). This addition was of very great economic importance. But its full potential would be realized only a decade later: at this stage the proportion of irrigated land amounted to 7 per cent, as against 16 per cent in 1945.¹⁶

SETTLEMENT: THE PEAK OF ACHIEVEMENT, 1948-1949

The expansion of the kibbutz movement which took place during the War of Independence and immediately after it was not only, or even primarily, the result of the sudden acquisition of new lands. Wartime conditions did not impair the belief that agricultural settlement was a vital national interest. On the contrary: shortly before the establishment of the state, the provisional governing body of the Yishuv decided that the declaration of independence would contain no definition of the borders, and that invasion by the neighbouring Arab states might well involve changes in the final boundaries of the state, in accordance with the fortunes of war. It was, therefore, important from the point of view of military and political strategy alike to settle the border areas, and ensure that Jewish-controlled territory should be permanently occupied as quickly as possible.

By the end of the first ceasefire in July 1948 thirteen new settlements

¹⁶ Barkai, *Growth Patterns*, 109.

had been established, mostly by groups whose members had been working, living, and fighting together since their mobilization to the Palmach before the war. Their places of settlement were abandoned land and buildings, most of them on the sites of German Templar settlements whose owners had been interned during the Second World War and did not return, and British army camps. Meanwhile, the settlement authorities, with the co-operation of the army, were drawing up plans for further strategic settlement in accordance with the changed conditions. So important was this thought to be that some of the mobilized training groups were released from other military obligations to set up outpost settlements in particularly dangerous or important spots.

By the end of 1948, a special committee of the Jewish Agency's settlement department and the army had compiled a list of ninety-six sites of major strategic importance where conditions were suitable for agricultural development. But the process of settlement did not wait for the planners to finish their work. From May 1948 until the end of that year, despite constant military tension and heavy losses in the war, twenty-four new kibbutzim had been established, as well as four *moshavim shitufi'im* and nine *moshavim*.

This process continued during 1949, as the war reached its end and attention turned increasingly to the new challenges to which the young state would have to respond. Between the establishment of the state in May 1948 and July 1949, when the last ceasefire agreement was signed, fifty-seven kibbutzim were established—not far from three times the greatest monthly average until then, in the immediate pre-state period.¹⁷

Two-thirds of these kibbutzim were founded by Jews from the Diaspora. But it was a very different Diaspora from that which had shaped the kibbutz movement before the war. In contrast with the overwhelming majority of Jews of Polish and German origin who still formed the demographic base of the kibbutz movement, the countries of origin of the new settlers were varied, and reflected the changes in the Jewish world caused by the cataclysm of the past decade (see Table 6.2). For instance, Zionist youth activity in Hungary had been largely clandestine for many years before the Second World War, and its part in the kibbutz movement small; now, since a relatively high proportion of its Jews had survived the war, there were more Hungarian Jews in the new kibbutzim than Poles. Before and during the war several youth movements in

¹⁷ During the tower and stockade period, one new kibbutz was established each month, on average. Between June 1945 and May 1948 the monthly average was almost 1.6, and from May 1948 to July 1949 close to 4.4.

TABLE 6.2 Origins of settlement groups, 1948-9^a

Origin	No. of founding groups ^b
Palestine	19
Hungary	7
Poland	6
North America	5
Romania	4
Youth Aliya groups	3
Survivors of ghettos and camps	3
Bulgaria	3
North Africa	2
South Africa	2
England	2
Turkey	1
Czechoslovakia	1
Iraq	1
Argentina	1

Sources: Shoshani, *Kvutza and Kibbutz*; Bein and Perlmann, *Immigration and Settlement*, 263-73; Oren, 'Settlement Policy', tables 3, 5; Hanoch, *Hebrew Villages*.

Notes

^a Most of these groups were based on common membership of a youth movement in a particular country or region. Youth Aliya groups were formed in the kibbutzim where their members had been educated, and the 'survivors' groups were formed soon after the liberation, by people who had gone through the Holocaust period together.

^b The number of founding groups exceeded the number of new kibbutzim since several groups sometimes joined forces to create a single kibbutz.

countries outside the traditional catchment areas of the 1930s had been developed with the help of emissaries from the kibbutz movements. Many of their graduates had now reached maturity, and were anxious to play their part in the defence and construction of the new state. Such countries, ranging from the United States and Argentina to Turkey and Iraq, account for about a quarter of the new kibbutzim.¹⁸ Their national composition reflected the social changes that had taken place among the Jewish people, and the process of 'ingathering of the exiles' taking place in all parts of Israel.

Most of these kibbutzim were founded by newly formed groups, with

¹⁸ Mendelssohn, 'Youth Movements in England'; Riemer, 'From Youth Party'; id., 'Habonim in North America'.

a relatively short history of communal life and preparation for the tasks ahead of them. There were, however, several groups which saw the new period in their lives as stemming from their earlier experiences. Kibbutz Lohamei Hageta'ot (the ghetto fighters' kibbutz) was founded by a group of Polish Jews who had fought heroically during the Holocaust. The central group in kibbutz Buchenwald (later renamed Netzer Sereni) was composed of people freed from that concentration camp in the last months of the European war. Other kibbutzim, such as Be'erot Yitzhak and Revadim, were relocations of groups whose original settlements had been destroyed during the War of Independence;¹⁹ and several others, including Yad Mordechai, Ramat Rahel, and Negba, had to be more or less completely rebuilt.

Several of the founding groups spent some time at an established kibbutz in order to accustom themselves to agricultural work and acquire a degree of social cohesion, but many went to their new homes virtually without preparation. Wartime conditions not only hastened the expansion of the kibbutz movement, but had a profound effect on the way in which the new kibbutzim began their existence. Most of the kibbutzim now founded by Palestinian-born groups were established by mobilized training groups or other Palmach formations who had fought together, often in the very places which they were now settling permanently. The military authorities considered this operation to be of such importance that many groups were released from army service for this purpose; indeed, the act of settlement was seen not as demobilization, but as a continuation in another form of their efforts to defend the state and its borders.

The geographical location of the new kibbutzim also reflects the changes which had come over the Yishuv during the war. In May 1948 the White Paper was abrogated, and Jews could settle wherever they would and could. Nor was it necessary to continue the long and arduous process of land purchase which had taken up so much time and money in Mandatory times. The mass flight of complete Arab communities left great areas unoccupied, many of them in positions which the war had shown to be of vital strategic importance. From September 1948 virtually all the new kibbutzim were founded on the sites of abandoned Arab villages, and cultivated their lands.

¹⁹ Be'erot Yitzhak held out against a massive Egyptian attack, though seventeen of its eighty-four defenders were killed and thirty-nine wounded. But the damage to the kibbutz was so extensive that its economic and social future was in jeopardy, and in 1948 the remaining members moved to a new site, on abandoned Templar property, near Lydda.

TABLE 6.3 Regional distribution of new kibbutzim, May 1948-July 1949

Area	No. of kibbutzim
Western Galilee	13
Negev and the south	12
Jerusalem corridor and approaches	9
Upper Galilee	6
Jezre'el valley	4
Haifa area	4
Coast	3
Lower Galilee	5
Beit She'an valley	3

The geographical expansion shown in Table 6.3 was the most visible, but not the only, expression of the degree to which the kibbutz movement was strengthened during this period; for many of the existing kibbutzim, which had been suffering from a chronic shortage of manpower throughout the war years, were also reinforced by groups and individuals. During 1948 such settlements absorbed almost 6,000 new immigrants: 2,175 in the Kibbutz Me'uhad, 2,075 in the Kibbutz Artzi, 1,175 in Hever Hakvutzot, and 376 in Ha'oved Hatzioni.²⁰

The cultural variety of the new settlers and the speed with which this operation was carried out involved a number of serious dangers. The 'nuclei' for settlement were no longer experienced, socially integrated groups which had spent years in Hechalutz training farms and working groups. Many of the new kibbutzim were founded by groups made up *ad hoc*, sometimes with little in common, and with no opportunity to gain the experience and undergo the process of selection which had marked their pre-war predecessors. As during the tower and stockade period, sites were chosen less for their economic possibilities than for their strategic position; and there was even less chance of selecting potentially productive land than there had been ten years earlier. Moreover, the administrative machinery of the kibbutz movements, the Jewish Agency, and the Histadrut was strained to the utmost, and their institutions were unable to give more than a minimum of advice and training. Most of these new settlements were geographically isolated: in terms of day-to-day administration and decision-making, all of them were virtually on their own. A typical example of such a new settlement is Beit Ha'emek, in Western Galilee.

²⁰ *UAW Report* (1949), 13.

A New Kibbutz: Beit Ha'emek's First Year

By the end of 1948 the effort to settle the newly conquered areas was at its height. Western Galilee was at the centre of this operation. Politically it was important that this area, which had not originally been allocated to the Jewish state by UNSCOP, should be settled as quickly and as intensively as possible. Strategically it was vital to ensure that in any future fighting the hinterland of Haifa, at that stage Israel's only port, should have a sizeable Jewish population. The establishment of Beit Ha'emek was part of an effort to solve both these problems.²¹

The village of Kuweikat was situated conveniently for observation and control of movement from the coast to the hill area of Western Galilee. During the War of Independence a unit of the Arab Liberation Army had been situated there, and it had been the starting-point of some of the forces which destroyed the convoy to Yehiam. In July 1948, in the course of the operation in which the Israeli army conquered the hilly hinterland of Acre and Naharia, the village was bombarded overnight. By morning the civilian inhabitants, apparently fearing retribution for their part in the Yehiam operation, had fled. A unit of the Israeli army dug in on a nearby hill, still known locally as 'the outpost': the remains of the trenches dug at that time can still be seen. There was little resistance, and the village was occupied temporarily by soldiers and civilian guards. But the political and military priorities mentioned above put it high on the list for permanent settlement, which was effected in January 1949.

The site of Kuweikat, which was shortly afterwards given the name of Beit Ha'emek (the house in the valley) after a biblical reference to a nearby site,²² was resettled by two groups of Hungarian Jews, most of whose members had belonged to the Habonim youth movement before the Second World War. The Hungarian Jewish community was one of the last to be deported by the Germans to the extermination camps, and a relatively large number survived the war, though very many of them bore the scars of their war experiences: among them, forced labour camps, long periods of hiding, and participation in the notorious 'death march' of the Jews of Budapest. Some had taken part in the Hungarian resistance movement, and several of the members of the groups which founded Beit Ha'emek were well known for their role in sabotaging the German war effort and saving Jews from the Nazi 'actions'.

²¹ The information in this section is based on material in the archives of kibbutz Beit Ha'emek, and interviews with a number of the founding members conducted by the author between 1985 and 1988.

²² Josh. 19: 27.

Both of these groups were formed in the course of the *briha*, and both had spent some time in the Cyprus detention camps. On their arrival in Palestine, they spent several months at veteran kibbutzim in order to accustom themselves to kibbutz life and agricultural work: one group was at Kfar Gil'adi, in Upper Galilee, the other at Kinneret.

The kibbutz movement decided that, despite their relatively short period of preparation, these two groups, together numbering some 160 people, should settle at Beit Ha'emek. They occupied a number of buildings on the outskirts of the village, and began to build their new life together.

The process of creating a new community was very hard. The only water available on the site of the kibbutz was in shallow wells next to the abandoned houses. This was scarcely enough for drinking and cooking, and had to be boiled before use. There was, therefore, no way at this stage of developing the intensive agricultural branches essential to support a community of this size. The major sources of income were un-irrigated field crops, whose yields were low, and the olive groves left by the former inhabitants, which provided only a seasonal and uncertain income. Within six months arrangements were made for the kibbutz tractor to bring a tankful of water from a neighbouring settlement every day, thus ensuring sufficient drinking water, and making it possible to keep livestock—a small herd of cows, a flock of sheep, and a few chickens. But this source of water was also uncertain, especially in the winter, when the tractor was often bogged down in the mud. As a result of the poverty and hardship which ensued from these conditions, people began to leave almost from the first day of settlement, and within six months only about half of the original settlers remained.

In the early months of Beit Ha'emek's existence, some income was earned by breaking up the abandoned houses of the former inhabitants and selling the materials. By October 1949 this source of revenue was worked out, and there was absolutely no work in the kibbutz which could bring in immediate income. The general meeting accepted an 'austerity plan', whereby investments were cut to the minimum, and forty of the sixty or so members then remaining were to work outside the kibbutz. This in itself was no easy thing: the group that worked in Tel Yosef lived in rough camping conditions near their place of work and arrived home only once every two weeks—even less frequently when, as happened more than once, there was a failure in the transport arrangements. Later, other groups worked with heavy equipment under similar conditions as far south as the northern Negev. In common with the rest of the country

the kibbutzim underwent almost four years of severe rationing, and Beit Ha'emek was as yet in no condition to supplement its meagre allocation with local produce. In November 1949 the monthly allocation per head was 1,500 grams of sugar, 600 grams of margarine, and 500 grams each of oil and rice, as well as one tin of meat, 200 grams of frozen meat, and a tin of sardines. The cooks who had to do their best with these scanty materials were inexperienced, and worked on primus stoves which often broke down. Living conditions were cramped, and the rooms of the few married couples were separated by thin plywood partitions. In the summer the whole of the kibbutz was covered by fine dust, which was ankle-deep in many places; in winter it turned into a particularly clinging type of mud. The nearest paved road was a mile from the centre of the kibbutz, and vehicles arriving in the winter often had to be towed for the final stage of their journey. Those who went in to town would leave their gumboots near the stopping-point of the one bus of the day, ready for use on the long climb home.

Some 6 kilometres to the north lay kibbutz Kabri, founded a few weeks after Beit Ha'emek. Two new immigrants' moshavim were also set up nearby during Beit Ha'emek's first year. To the south there were no Jewish settlements for some 25 kilometres, but there were several Arab and Druze villages whose inhabitants had remained in their homes throughout the war. For the new settlers, young and inexperienced, this was a threatening situation. They had no certain knowledge of their Arab neighbours' attitude, nor of the number of former inhabitants of Kuweikat who might attempt to return and claim their homes and property. In law, these had been appropriated by the Custodian of Abandoned Property, but nobody knew what might happen in the politically uncertain atmosphere of the time. One of the founder members later recalled the advice given by some of their Jewish neighbours: 'If an Arab comes into the kibbutz, hit him first, and then talk to him.' It was some years before the kibbutz members established any more amicable relationship than this with their non-Jewish neighbours, apart from the Druze communities, who had always been a persecuted minority in the Arab world, and had fought alongside the Jews in the later stages of the War of Independence.

It would have been easier to deal with these problems had the community been united and experienced. The fact that it was composed of two separate groups created social difficulties almost from the first day: it was hard to break down existing loyalties and ways of life, and to create a new communal consciousness. Even more critical was the fact that,

despite their youth movement background, many of the founder members bore the scars of their war experiences, and found it difficult to adapt: some could not bear the intensive communal life of the kibbutz, with its lack of privacy and demand for discipline; others were daunted by the prospect of many years of physical work and a low standard of living, and sought more immediate relief after their wartime privations.

It was already becoming clear that such relief would not come in the near future. Despite their period of preparation in veteran kibbutzim, the new settlers were not experienced agriculturalists, and it took them several years to attain a high degree of expertise. Moreover, they were working land whose qualities were unknown, in an area so far unsettled by Jews, where experience gained in other parts of the country was not necessarily of much help. A list of the crops tried and quickly abandoned includes a variety of vegetables, groundnuts, and figs. Other agricultural branches included sheep-breeding, vineyards, and citrus orchards, which were eventually closed down as being unprofitable after several relatively successful years.

As a result of all these factors, many of the settlers gave up and sought a better future in town: by October 1949 only fifty-one adults were left. These 'desertions', as they were often called, added to the sense of insecurity of those who stayed, and tended to perpetuate the vicious cycle of dwindling numbers and loss of faith in the kibbutz. Two attempts were made to make swift economic progress by establishing industries: a bakery was planned, and the oven installed with the financial help of the Jewish Agency; the carpentry shop was enlarged to accommodate a small workshop for making wooden toys. The physical installations for both these projects remained in place for many years, but the skilled workers on whom they depended left even before they could be put into operation, several of them to establish flourishing businesses in town. At this stage, those who remained found it difficult to utilize even the few advantages which they found on their arrival. One of the documents preserved in the archives is a letter from the Histadrut accusing the kibbutz of exploiting Arab labour for seasonal work in harvesting the olives which covered a large part of their land.

Under these conditions, it required a very high degree of faith, courage, and persistence to continue the exacting task of building a viable community, and the scars acquired in this early period influenced the development of the kibbutz for many years to come; for instance, by 1950 the differences between the two founding groups had acquired political overtones, and in 1950 some thirty Mapam supporters left to

join kibbutz Eyal, foreshadowing the split in the Kibbutz Me'uhad in the following year (see Chapter 8). The process of training and selection which had begun in the Cyprus camps continued, though at great cost to the kibbutz community, in Beit Ha'emek. In 1952 a few dozen who had survived the early years were reinforced by groups from the British and Dutch Habonim movements, and the discovery of water in the vicinity by deep boring in 1954 made it possible to develop intensive agriculture and expand the community further to become a thriving kibbutz.

Beit Ha'emek is one example among dozens who experienced severe initial difficulties. It is not surprising that a number of kibbutzim failed to survive, and either broke up completely or adopted less exacting forms of social structure. The fact that only six of the kibbutzim founded during this period broke up, while four became *moshavim shitufi'im*, is a tribute to the strength and persistence of the great majority.²³

Settlement and Security

In the previous chapter I discussed the effectiveness of pre-state 'settlement strategy', and came to the conclusion that in purely geopolitical terms it was only one factor among many—though a very important one—in determining the boundaries of the state as fixed by the United Nations. I suggested that the final contribution of the kibbutzim to shaping the borders of the state should be considered in the light of the War of Independence and its results.

The final boundaries of the state accorded almost entirely with the ceasefire lines of 1949. The two most conspicuous differences between the UNSCOP map and that of 1949 were the inclusion in the Jewish state of Western Galilee and the 'corridor' linking Jerusalem with the coastal plain. Both of these were the result of military conquest, just as the abandoning of the Old City of Jerusalem and the exclusion of the Etzion bloc region from the Jewish state were the result of military failure. The first question to be asked, therefore, is to what extent the existence of the kibbutzim and moshavim contributed to the victories of the IDF.

In the course of the war and in subsequent years the belief that the kibbutz (and, to a lesser degree, the moshav) was a vital part of the defence system of the state came to the fore both in the sequence of events and in the consciousness of Israeli policy-makers. This view is epitomized in Ben-Gurion's declaration that 'More than we saved the settlements—the settlements saved us.'²⁴ It became encapsulated in

²³ *UAW Report* (1949), 44-6; Shoshani, *Kvutza and Kibbutz*.

²⁴ Mapai council, 19 June 1948, quoted in Shiran, 'Settlement Policy', 106.

the language in such phrases as 'front-line settlements', 'hedgehog fortresses', 'outpost settlements', and other, less easily translatable, expressions used by military commentators and historians, politicians and planners.²⁵ Its effects can clearly be seen in the discussion of questions of manpower in this chapter: had the military authorities not been convinced of the value of settlement for the conduct of the war and the consolidation of the IDF's victories, they would not have agreed so easily to the release of first-class soldiers in order to found new kibbutzim.

That this was a definite change in emphasis—to a large degree, even in the accepted view of the purpose of colonization—emerges from the change in the state of the kibbutzim in the Negev, which had been set up primarily for political reasons, in order to ensure Jewish control of the region. In May 1947 a report by the local military commander said that they were quite unprepared to defend themselves against attack: apart from those who had been trained in the Palmach, their members 'lacked military experience, and had not the minimum training required for defence'.²⁶ Less than a year later the first buildings of Bror Hayil were set up and manned by a military unit, which was relieved by a civilian kibbutz group two months later. This act exemplifies the process described by Shiran as 'the militarization of settlement': from now on comprehensive plans for settlement were approved, and often initiated, by the military authorities. There was even a 'settlement officer' attached to the General Staff, though the technical work of planning, preparing, and financing new settlements was still executed by the officials of the Jewish National Fund and the Settlement Fund, aided by the Histadrut's Agricultural Centre.²⁷

In historical perspective, however, it may be asked whether this concept, whose almost universal acceptance sprang at least in part from 'conservative thinking',²⁸ was justified by the events of the War of Independence and the period immediately after it.

This question has been answered to some extent in the account of the course of the war in the previous chapter. The achievements of the Palmach were to no small extent the outcome of the character and training of this very unusual force, which were rooted in the way of life and thought of the kibbutz movement. In the first stage of the war, when the Yishuv was attacked mainly by local forces, the stand of kibbutzim such as Degania and Mishmar Ha'emek was a major factor in defending Israeli territory against irregular forces. It was also a source of inspiration

²⁵ Shiran, 'Settlement Policy', 106.

²⁷ *Ibid.* 66-8, 88-102.

²⁶ Quoted *ibid.* 40.

²⁸ *Ibid.* 233.

to the Yishuv, counteracting the effects of the loss of the Etzion bloc, and a serious blow to enemy morale: factors which, though less tangible than the conquest and defence of territory, are important elements in any war.

However, the existence of a kibbutz did not necessarily mean that it survived the war. The kibbutzim of the northern Negev were certainly a prime strategic asset from the second stage of the war onwards. But, although they all played a vital part in slowing the advance of the Egyptian troops, three of them were evacuated, and their members returned only in the wake of the conquering Israeli army; and the same applies to several other kibbutzim on other fronts. Moreover, although most kibbutzim were able to withstand attack by irregular troops and by hostile neighbours, the course of the war—beginning with the Etzion battle, where the attackers were aided by the Arab Legion—shows clearly that very few settlements were able to hold out unaided against a regular army.²⁹ In each of the major battles in which they were involved, the kibbutzim themselves constituted geographic and tactical bases, and their members—as Hagana members, and later as local defence units of the IDF—took part in the fighting and gave aid and support to the army units. Sometimes these units fought from within the kibbutzim, reinforcing the members; at others they relieved the pressure on the kibbutz by mounting counter-attacks or setting up fortified posts in the neighbourhood. Without this help from outside forces, many of the kibbutzim would probably not have survived the battle.³⁰

The simplistic version of the kibbutz as a fortress able to stand alone and survive against the odds must therefore be modified. But the military value of kibbutz settlement was far greater than I implied in my analysis of its political effect. I pointed out that more than seventy kibbutzim were 'wasted' if their prime purpose was to fix the borders of the state. But within those borders there were enclaves in which the weight of the Arab population was overwhelming, and had a serious effect on matters of internal security such as lines of communication and the safety of neighbouring Jewish towns and villages. In the regions where the Jewish population had been strengthened by settlement over the previous decade these dangers were far less salient. Thus, for example, even though Upper Galilee was politically part of the Jewish state in all the partition schemes, the fifteen kibbutzim established between 1937 and

²⁹ An outstanding exception is kibbutz Nirim, in the northern Negev, which held out unaided against the Egyptian army from May 1948 until the end of the war.

³⁰ Pa'il, 'Settlement', 82-5.

1947 enabled it to withstand attack, and prevented it from being torn away from the state by force of arms. And the very existence of these kibbutzim, combined with their reputation for stubborn defence, served to deflect the invading Arab armies, and enabled the defenders to predict their route with a fair degree of accuracy.³¹

In several areas civilian settlement led to, or supported, military conquest followed by permanent territorial gain. In Western Galilee the original purpose of the half-dozen Jewish villages was political—to ensure that the region would be part of the Jewish state. In this they failed. But the fact that they existed, and the determination of the settlers not to abandon their homes even under siege conditions, led to a decision on the part of the General Staff of the IDF to attempt to raise the siege. The lightning campaign whose immediate purpose was to save a handful of Jewish settlers eventually led to the inclusion of the whole of Western Galilee in the State of Israel and, as a by-product, to the flight of a high proportion of the Arab inhabitants, and a fundamental change in the character of the region.

It is, however, easy enough to point to areas which were conquered, and remained under Israeli control, without the stimulus of previous settlement: for instance, the Jerusalem corridor and Lower Galilee, including Nazareth, situated in an entirely Arab-populated region. Here, Israeli territorial claims were defined by the simple fact of conquest, combined with broad strategic considerations such as the need to secure the approach to Jerusalem. Conquest did not always lead to occupation: the decisions to withdraw from the Sinai desert, the south of Lebanon, and the areas which became Jordanian territory were political rather than military. But it is significant that there was virtually no Jewish settlement in these areas, and, therefore, comparatively weak motivation to include them in the Jewish state.

Jewish settlement was, then, far from being the only important factor in the military actions of 1947-9 and their territorial outcome. But it was certainly a major, and in some cases a decisive, element in these, as in the political developments which went to shape the borders of the State of Israel.

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

The establishment of the State of Israel, and the victories of the War of Independence, confirmed and enhanced the status of Mapai, with Ben-

³¹ Pa'il, 'Settlement', 85-6.

Gurion at its head, as the leading force in the state. There were forty-six Mapai representatives in the first Knesset (1949-51), as against nineteen members of Mapam, sixteen of the Orthodox religious parties, and fourteen of Herut (the erstwhile Revisionists, Lehi, and IZL). In Noah Lucas's words:

The pattern imprinted on the first elected government became the most durable aspect of Israeli coalition politics: an alliance between secular social democrats and orthodox religious interests occupying a centre ground on social and economic issues, with co-optation of additional representatives on the near left or right as circumstances allowed.³²

From the point of view of kibbutz representation the pattern set at this point also lasted for many years. Twenty-six (21.7%) of the 120 Knesset members were members of kibbutzim. This meant that the kibbutz members had more than three times as many representatives as was warranted by their numbers in the general population. It is true that the bulk of this number were members of the two kibbutz-controlled sections of Mapam, who provided fourteen members of the faction's nineteen. But in Mapai too the kibbutzim were over-represented (ten out of forty-six: almost 22%, as against the kibbutzim's 6.3% in the general population). On the other hand, although the Mapai list contained prestigious figures such as Joseph Baratz and Shlomo Lavi, who were among the founding fathers of Degania and Ein Harod, not a single minister was a kibbutz member.

It seems, therefore, that, although the kibbutz movements were close to the top of the political leadership of the state, they had not reached the highest policy-making echelon. This situation prevailed, with few variations, until the government coalition of 1955, when two kibbutz members each from Mapam and Ahdut Ha'avoda and one from Mapai became ministers.

Apart from their demand for greater help in absorbing new immigrants in the kibbutzim, and matters connected with their economic activities, the Mapai factions in the Knesset and the Histadrut went along with the dominant trend in Mapai, accepting Ben-Gurion as pace-setter and arbiter on all major issues. In the political sphere, as in others, it functioned as a serving élite. Mapam, on the other hand, now combined the activist tradition of the Kibbutz Me'uhad with the oppositionist attitudes of the Kibbutz Artzi, and saw itself as an alternative to Mapai's political leadership. Since this party's development was

³² *History of Israel*, 312-13.

intertwined with that of these two kibbutz movements, it warrants more detailed treatment.

Mapam

At the time of the foundation of Mapam in 1948 there were still deep ideological differences between its two wings (Ahdut Ha'avoda, led by the Kibbutz Me'uhad, and Hashomer Hatzair, led by the Kibbutz Artzi), particularly on the matter of Israel's relations with the Arabs: in principle, Hashomer Hatzair still believed in the idea of a binational state, while Ahdut Ha'avoda aimed at an undivided Israel west of the Jordan. At this stage, however, though these matters led to much discussion over the wording of the new party's aims and constitution, they seemed of little practical consequence compared with the issues on which they were united. In their internal politics both supported the Mapai leadership in matters connected with settlement and immigration, but shared an oppositionist stance in trade union affairs. The pro-Soviet stance of Hashomer Hatzair, well entrenched as a result of several generations of Marxist education in the youth movement, was buttressed by Russian support for the establishment of the State of Israel in 1947, and by the supply of Czech arms in the course of the War of Independence; and Ahdut Ha'avoda had adopted a very similar position from the time of its establishment in 1944. Thus, both were ideologically committed to a pro-Soviet attitude, even though their tactical stance called for neutrality in foreign policy.³³ And each of them was firmly opposed to the dominance of the 'reformist' Mapai party, with its reservations about the role of the kibbutz in the state. Realizing that many of their former differences had become irrelevant, by the end of 1947 both parties concluded that only within a broader alliance did they have any chance of substantial political influence. In January 1948 they united to form a new party, Mapam.

Two of the thirteen ministers in the provisional government, and three of the twenty-five members of the Provisional Council, which ruled the country from May 1948 until February 1949, were representatives of Mapam. Its ministers attempted to use their influence in questions concerned with relations with the Arabs. Here, despite their past ideological differences, they found common ground in advocating the principle of return of 'peace-loving' refugees after the war, and the

³³ In a 1966 interview Ya'akov Hazan said: 'Mapam as a party has never been neutral in the world struggle; Mapam as a member of the government advocates non-alliance.' Brecher, *Foreign Policy*, 164-5.

reservation of land to accommodate them: both branches of the party contended that geographical separation of Jews and Arabs would entail the abandonment of the unity of the Land of Israel—a concept which they both supported, though their notions of its political character were quite different.³⁴ Mordechai Bentov, of kibbutz Mishmar Ha'emek (minister of the interior) and Aharon Tsizling of Ein Harod (minister of agriculture) were both active in bringing examples of the destruction of abandoned Arab villages to the notice of the government, and were marginally effective in slowing down the process. They also formed an informal alliance with the minister of minorities (Behor Shitrit of Mapai) in attempting to defend those Arabs who did not flee the country, to ensure that they had rights of citizenship, and to influence—later, to nullify—the activities of the military government which took on the administration of Arab towns and villages. But the principle of the return of the refugees was generally agreed to be impracticable as 'the end of the war' receded with the failure of the Lausanne peace talks in 1951. And, while Mapam's struggle for human rights remained a permanent part of its political stance, its leaders gradually became reconciled to Jewish occupation and development of Arab land: at first because of the exigencies of war, later in view of the requirements of immigrant absorption and agricultural development.³⁵

The Palmach: Political Aspects

The controversy over the Palmach was no less a political than a military issue. In 1948 Ben-Gurion said:

There has been an attempt . . . to turn the Palmach into the monopoly of one party . . . this attempt has done great damage to the efficiency of the force . . . the faction which saw the Palmach first and foremost as its private army has tried to maintain its monopoly, without regard to the interests of the state and its security. . . . It cannot be that in an army most of which is subject to the authority of the state there should be a sector obedient to some other power, open or hidden.³⁶

One of Ben-Gurion's prime motives in demanding the abolition of the Palmach was his suspicion that it would be used to strengthen the power of the Mapam opposition. His misgivings were not without grounds, and harked back to the period of the struggle against the British.

In principle, the Palmach attempted to carry on the 'comprehensive' tradition of Hechalutz, to recruit its soldiers from all political groups

³⁴ Margalit, *United Left*, 283-5.

³⁵ Morris, *Palestinian Refugee Problem*, 162-8, 183-8, 232-3, 239; Margalit, *United Left*, 285-6, 289-95.

³⁶ *In Israel's Battle*, 156-8, 160.

who accepted the authority of the Histadrut and the Zionist movement, and to execute loyally the decisions of their governing bodies. And, indeed, there is no evidence that this loyalty in action was ever infringed, or even seriously questioned. But the 'spirit of the Palmach', as it was expressed in the give and take of discussions at work, during training and round the camp fire, in the attitudes of the education officers and in the underground press, was very different. It was in the very nature of a force such as this to be activist in the military sense. In the words of Eliezer Shoshani, himself a supporter of Mapai: 'There was complete loyalty to [the Palmach] on the part of those who belonged to Faction B, Mapai, the Kibbutz Artzi, the religious kibbutzim and the politically unaffiliated. If the Palmach was well known for its activism, the members of the Kibbutz Artzi who served in its ranks were no less activist than the others.'³⁷ This was no secret. During the confused and politically sensitive period after the break-up of the Jewish Revolt Movement, when the dissident groups were becoming increasingly active and the British ever more arbitrary and unpopular, the leaders of the Yishuv held the Palmach on a tight rein, and confined its activities to support for immigration and settlement. In one sense, the activist line served as a safety-valve for these independent-minded young people's natural eagerness for action: the combination of ideological independence and criticism of the Zionist authorities with obedience in practice gave them the feeling that they were influencing the course of events, and pre-empted any inclination to desert to the dissident organizations.³⁸

However, vehement criticism of the Zionist establishment was not only to be heard among the rank and file. It was expressed publicly in the highest echelons of the force. In October 1946 Yitzhak Sadeh, the highly esteemed commander of the Palmach, wrote: 'Our leaders . . . must prove that they are still faithful to . . . the principles of fighting Zionism . . . I will only follow leadership of this sort; only such leadership can be a pillar of fire going before the host.'³⁹ Ben-Gurion used these words not only to castigate Sadeh as potentially disloyal to the leadership of the Zionist movement, but also to relieve him of the command of the Palmach. This was a quite unscrupulous⁴⁰ exploitation of Sadeh's

³⁷ Quoted in Dinur, *Hagana*, ii. 1311.

³⁸ Meir Pa'il, himself a junior officer in the Palmach at the time and now a military historian, interviewed by the author June 1995.

³⁹ *L'ahdut Ha'avoda*, 8 Oct. 1946.

⁴⁰ Sadeh's words were not his own. He was quoting Eliahu Golomb, the commander of the Hagana, also an extreme activist. But Golomb was very close politically to Ben-Gurion, who never cast doubts on his loyalty.

rhetorical trope. But the accusation of potential disloyalty, combined with the charge of lack of military discipline, returned in the very different circumstances of 1948-9.

It can be claimed that the other aspect of Sadeh's, and Mapam's, ideology gave rather more substance to this charge.⁴¹ The very fact that the Palmach was so closely identified with an opposition party gave that party additional electoral strength. Ben-Gurion hinted, and his lieutenants openly said, that in certain circumstances this strength could be used outside the electoral field: in other words, that the Palmach's loyalty to the State of Israel was doubtful. This accusation sprang from the increasingly pro-Soviet stand of Mapam, and the feeling that, if the Soviet Union were to regret its pro-Israeli stand, the party might find itself in a serious dilemma. None of the leaders of Mapam believed that such a situation could arise, or that their Zionist loyalties would be in doubt if it did. But to say, as they did, that Ben-Gurion's suspicions were not only unfounded but completely unthinkable—and, therefore, that he himself could not really believe them—shows a high degree of naïvety or disingenuousness.

There is little evidence that anybody in the Palmach or Mapam contemplated any sort of revolt; on the contrary, the whole of their history shows that they confined their revolutionary zeal to speech and action within the democratic framework.⁴² But the existence of the dissident groups, the *Altalena* incident, and the situation in Jerusalem, where the IZL and the Lehi maintained an independent existence until the assassination of Count Bernadotte in September 1948, all emphasized the precariousness of Israeli government control over oppositionist groups within the state. At least potentially, the Palmach was such a group; and Ben-Gurion would have been foolish not to take this possibility into consideration.

In practice, however, during the whole of the Palmach crisis, from the dismissal of Galili in May 1948 until the resignation of most of the senior officers identified with Mapam towards the end of 1949, Galili, the party's senior representative in the defence establishment, acted

⁴¹ In his articles of 1946-7 Sadeh expressed very extreme pro-Soviet views. For instance, he defended Zhdanov's rigid censorship of Russian literature, comparing the work of dissident writers to a gangrenous limb. The article concludes: 'When symptoms of danger to the whole body appear—blessed be the hand of the surgeon, cruel to be kind.' 'Round the Camp-fire', *L'ahdut Ha'avoda*, Nov. 1946.

⁴² It is doubtful whether Yosske Rabinovitch's remark that the foundation of the State of Israel would drive the Palmach even further underground was any more than empty rhetoric. Quoted by Avraham Aderet, in Magen, 'Sixty Years', 107.

impeccably. Though he was the only Mapam member who might conceivably have been a rival to Ben-Gurion as director of military operations, he gave in to him (though under protest) at every stage, and refused to allow his party to present him as an alternative defence minister to Ben-Gurion. But within Mapam there were those, particularly Yitzhak Ben-Aharon and Ya'akov Riftin, who saw the Palmach as a source of political influence. They were prepared to bring the issue to a head, which could well lead to the replacement of Ben-Gurion (had they the strength to bring this about), in their efforts to preserve the Palmach and their dominant position within it.⁴³

In the eight years of its existence the Palmach had amassed a great deal of actual and potential power: educational, political, social, and military. Ben-Gurion was concerned that it should not be used to challenge his personal influence in the embryonic state. A less forceful or domineering personality might well have accepted the compromises suggested by the Gruenbaum committee, or found other ways to neutralize the political character of the Palmach without alienating its high command or forfeiting its military traditions and experience. Ben-Gurion's need to dominate those around him was the negative aspect of the determination and single-mindedness which had overcome the hesitations and fears of his allies, and were central to the creation of the State of Israel.

In a broader perspective, the controversy over the Palmach was one important stage of the struggle over the question of *mamlachtiut*—Ben-Gurion's attempt to ensure the predominance of the state in spheres which had been administered in the pre-state period by voluntary (and, usually, politically constituted) bodies such as the Histadrut and the clandestine fighting forces.⁴⁴ This change inevitably decreased the influence of the opposition parties and, therefore, buttressed the rule of Mapai. But, concomitantly with the inter-party struggle, the matter at issue was the political and administrative structure of the nascent state.⁴⁵

On the other hand, it would be naïve to suppose that this was Ben-Gurion's only purpose. Throughout the war there were differences of opinion between him and Allon, who pressed for the conquest of the whole of Palestine west of the Jordan—in accordance with the Palmach's (and Ahdut Ha'avoda's) concept of an undivided Jewish state. Ben-

⁴³ Gelber, *Why Was the Palmach Disbanded?*, chs. 9 and 11, quotes extensively from minutes of the deliberations in Mapam.

⁴⁴ See Ch. 7 below.

⁴⁵ Lissak, 'Civilian Components'.

Gurion, who had apparently reached an understanding with King Abdullah on the control of those parts of Palestine allocated to the Arab state by the UN, consistently blocked Allon's suggestions, and preferred commanders loyal to himself for the eastern front.⁴⁶

The nature of this controversy, and the way it was resolved, were highlighted when Allon's forces penetrated deep into Sinai at the end of 1948. When ordered to retreat immediately in the face of an American ultimatum, Allon travelled to Tel Aviv in order to request enough time to complete the isolation of the Egyptian forces in the Gaza Strip. The request was refused—overtly, because Ben-Gurion feared military intervention by the British; but also, according to some historians, because he intended this area to be Jordan's outlet to the sea. At a meeting of senior officers on the southern front Ben-Gurion's order was criticized furiously, on military and political grounds, to the point that some of those present suggested disobeying it. Allon's reply was: 'Your criticisms are absolutely correct. But there is no question of not accepting the orders of the democratically elected civilian authority. That is the nature of a democratic state.'⁴⁷ In all its aspects—the interplay of military, political, ideological, and personal considerations, the outspoken discussion, and the denouement—this incident typified the Palmach.

The dispersal of the Palmach had one unforeseen result. Twenty-two high-ranking officers, of proven ability but with marked sympathy for Mapam, were 'retired' from the IDF, leaving the field open for the promotion of officers loyal to Mapai and Ben-Gurion.⁴⁸ The army was undoubtedly the poorer as a result. But they put their energies into other fields, many of them within the kibbutz movement or in their own kibbutzim, and added to the reserve of leaders and administrators which was so badly needed at the time. Others went into politics: the best-known are Israel Galili of Na'an, deputy premier under Golda Meir, and Yig'al Allon of Ginossar, later foreign minister of Israel and candidate for the premiership. The army's loss was the kibbutz movements' gain—in particular, the gain of the Kibbutz Me'uhad.

The military effects of this affair are still a matter of controversy. Politically, it created a great deal of bitterness within Mapam, and stirred the flames of hatred of Mapai and Ben-Gurion which already

⁴⁶ Shlaim, *Collusion Across the Jordan*; Peri, *Between Battles and Ballots*, 57-9.

⁴⁷ Interview by the author with Meir Pa'il, Nov. 1995. Pa'il remembered this occasion as a 'moment of revelation', which deeply influenced his world-view. Allon's own account appeared in *Ma'ariv*, 16 June 1975, and is quoted in Kafkafi, *Truth or Faith*, 111.

⁴⁸ Brenner, *The 'Retirement'*; Peri, *Between Battles and Ballots*, ch. 3.

existed within the party, and was remembered by the leaders and rank and file for many years.

THE KIBBUTZ MOVEMENT AFTER THE WAR

At the end of the War of Independence, the kibbutz movement could look on the past dozen years with a justified measure of pride. Its members had withstood three periods of armed struggle, two of which were aimed directly at the Yishuv, and played a vital part in its defence. The communal way of life had shown itself to be adaptable in the extreme, and had successfully withstood direct physical attack, economic strains, and the constant drain of manpower which resulted from successive states of emergency. As a result, its prestige in the State of Israel and the world, and its share in the population of the state, were higher than they had ever been. In many respects the kibbutz was seen, by most Israelis and by many outside the State of Israel, to symbolize all that was best and most characteristic of the young Jewish state.

During this period kibbutz society had also been strengthened internally in many ways. It was no longer regarded as an experimental way of life, but as a well-established and organized form of society, in which the basic values of equality, direct democracy, and social solidarity were incorporated into the daily business of living. The self-confidence of the kibbutz was also expressed in the number of its children, and the general acceptance of its special educational system. In the veteran kibbutzim some of the younger generation had already reached maturity, were fitting into the community, and had acquitted themselves well at work and in the war. The use of kibbutz educational practice in the Youth Aliya groups, several of which had already set up new kibbutzim, was also a matter for pride.

On the other hand, a number of serious deficiencies had been revealed and aggravated during the war years. The politicization of the kibbutz movements had led to acrimonious debate and internal divisions which showed no signs of being healed. The war itself had destroyed a number of kibbutzim, and left others gravely damaged both physically and socially. Above all, the Holocaust had destroyed what had up to then been the natural reserve of the kibbutz movement. The post-war Jewish world could no longer be relied on to provide the relatively large numbers of pioneers who had built and reinforced the kibbutzim since the early 1920s. The seeds of the future were already evident in the list of new settlements established during 1949. Of the twenty-four new moshavim,

only five followed the pre-war model of 'organizations', parallel to the *plugot* of the kibbutz movement, with a common movement or army background and a certain amount of agricultural experience and training. The rest were 'immigrants' moshavim', to which new immigrants with little or no agricultural experience were sent by the Jewish Agency. A trend was set which would continue in future years, with grave consequences for the future of the kibbutz.

The End of Pioneering? The Kibbutz in the 1950s

THE unprecedented rate of settlement between May 1948 and July 1949 marked the end of an era in kibbutz history, and was followed by an equally unprecedented crisis. It took place against the background of the immense demographic changes which accompanied the metamorphosis of the Yishuv into the State of Israel. From May 1948 until the end of the year, some 100,000 immigrants were added to the 650,000 Jews of pre-state Palestine. During 1949 another quarter of a million entered the country, bringing the total Jewish population to rather more than a million by the end of the year. The first to arrive were the survivors of the Holocaust, from the Cyprus detention camps and direct from Europe, and relatively small numbers from the Arab countries. Early in 1949 there began the mass evacuation of the Jews of the Middle Eastern countries, who rapidly formed the bulk of the new immigrants; but eastern European Jews also continued to arrive, subject to the political decisions of the new regimes in their countries of origin. By the end of the first period of mass immigration, towards the middle of 1953, some 722,000 Jews had arrived in the country: 50.7 per cent of them had been born in Asia and Africa, 48.6 per cent in Europe, and 0.7 per cent in America and Oceania.¹

The size and urgency of the successive waves of immigration caught the newly constituted government of Israel by surprise: plans had been made for a more gradual and orderly transfer of the remnants of European Jewry. Urged on by the fear that emigration would shortly be forbidden, they filled and refilled the transit camps and the ships of the Mossad, and swamped the absorption camps which had been prepared for them. The Jews of the Arab countries were motivated partly by Zionist beliefs and messianic hopes, partly by the fear of persecution, and partly by the deliberate policy of the governments of their countries of origin. They, too, found the absorption authorities ill prepared to deal with them, and for many their earliest period in the country created traumas whose effects are still felt in Israeli society.

¹ Sicion, *Immigration*, 33.

From the very earliest days of mass immigration, absorption was a mixture of governmental planning—often inept and unable to cope with the unexpected waves of humanity which continued to arrive—and individual enterprise. Thus, the occupation of uninhabited houses in Jaffa, Lydda, and other abandoned Arab towns was not a matter of government decision. In the first instance, the houses were simply taken over by new immigrants and demobilized soldiers; only in the course of time were they registered by the Custodian of Enemy Property, and allocated according to criteria of need and seniority. But the numbers who could be accommodated in this way were limited. In March 1949 immigration had reached its peak, with more than 1,000 immigrants arriving each day. By the end of April there were 54,000 people in the transit camps, and conditions became quite unbearable. From this point on, instead of being kept in camps at public expense, immigrants were sent to *ma'abarot*—temporary villages, which had a very low standard of accommodation and few municipal services, and were situated close to existing towns or *moshavot*. Here they had to find work in the vicinity, or in the public works projects promoted by the Jewish Agency. Thus the debilitating effect of camp life was replaced by relative independence and the possibility of work for most of the new immigrants. But even so, many of them were still dependent on public agencies for employment and social welfare. One result of the new policy was that the immigrants, with all their problems, were brought from the relative isolation of the camps to the doorsteps of the established communities of the Yishuv, including, in many cases, the veteran kibbutzim.²

Rural settlement was largely a function of government policy. The decision to base new Jewish settlements on abandoned Arab villages was made towards the end of 1948. It soon became clear, however, that the number of voluntarily constituted groups which could form the nuclei of new kibbutzim and moshavim was much smaller than the situation demanded: they were able to settle only about half the places deemed necessary for security reasons.³ Two new forms of settlement were initiated: immigrants' moshavim, which had the social structure of the moshav, but were under the direction of the Jewish Agency until their members were considered to be capable of running their own concerns; and 'labour villages', whose inhabitants were dependent on public works for their livelihood. Some of the latter developed into permanent villages, and others were later abandoned.

In all of these enterprises the government and/or the Jewish Agency

² Bein and Perlmann, *Immigration and Settlement*, 65–70.

³ *Ibid.* 89.

were the planners and initiators. But their eventual fate depended on the character and initiative of the new immigrants themselves, and on social forces which were often beyond the control of any governmental agency. Thus from a very early stage there was a tendency for the more easily integrated families to leave the *ma'abarot*. Many became permanent slums; others turned into development towns; others again were closed down in the mid-1950s, and their inhabitants moved to public housing schemes. Similarly, many labour villages and immigrants' moshavim were abandoned, and in several of them the population was renewed more than once.

THE CRISIS: SYMPTOMS AND CAUSES

Settlement

The development of the kibbutz movement in this period stands in marked contrast to this massive and dynamic process of absorption. Twenty-two new kibbutzim and four *moshavim shitufi'im* were established in the year beginning July 1949. But during the same period 127 other new rural settlements were established. The great majority of these were moshavim, set up and administered in their early stages by the Jewish Agency's Settlement Department and inhabited by new immigrants, most of them with no previous agricultural experience or training; only nineteen were established in the traditional manner by existing settlement groups. About twenty-five of the new settlements began their existence as labour villages; of these, several were subsequently abandoned, while others became moshavim and three grew into development towns.⁴

Both in absolute terms and in relation to other forms of settlement these figures show a marked decline of new kibbutz settlement, after the burst of activity of the previous year. The increased number of new moshavim in relation to the new kibbutzim was not a flash in the pan, but the harbinger of a permanent trend. From June 1948 to the end of 1954—a period which included the 'spurt of settlement' during and immediately after the war—100 kibbutzim and nine *moshavim shitufi'im* were established, as against 180 immigrants' moshavim and forty-three founded by groups who had been in the country for some time; most of these were members of the second generation of established moshavim. Of these settlements, sixty-four kibbutzim and ninety-seven moshavim—

⁴ *UAW Report* (1949), 17-19.

eighty-three of the latter populated by new immigrants—were situated in localities defined by the military authorities as the most vital and dangerous border areas. The moshavim had encroached on what had been one of the major military functions of the kibbutzim since 1936.⁶ No less significant was the fact that between 1950 and 1952 three new 'development towns' were established in border areas most of which had hitherto been settled almost entirely by kibbutzim and moshavim; and that they were the harbingers of another ten such towns to be set up by the end of 1957. They provided an alternative to rural settlement for those who could or would not fit into the established towns, where the rapidly growing poorer districts were largely populated by new immigrants.

Within the course of a year, therefore, the kibbutz movement reached an unprecedented peak of constructive activity, and entered a decline in relation to the rest of Israeli society from which it has still not recovered. But this process was just one aspect of a many-faceted crisis which developed almost as soon as the fighting stopped.

Recruitment

Throughout the history of the kibbutz one major factor has determined its capacity to meet the challenges of the time: the availability of manpower. The post-war crisis was in many respects simply a reflection of this.

Before the Second World War the existence of the European youth movements had ensured that the kibbutzim were constantly replenished by young people who had undergone a high degree of selection and training. After the war, these movements were resuscitated more or less in their pre-war form, though they became little more than a convenient framework for organizing new immigrants and channelling them into existing institutions. Thus in the first year of the existence of the state the pre-war conditions of recruitment were paralleled to a considerable degree in terms of numbers: the camps of the *briha*, the Youth Aliya groups, the Palmach, and the youth movements of Israel and the Diaspora fulfilled the functions of the pre-war youth movements in recruiting kibbutz members. But once the great wave of European refugees had arrived in Israel this source of manpower dried up almost completely.

Between the world wars the youth movement of Europe and the Yishuv had been minorities within their respective communities, and they managed to recruit no more than 6 to 8 per cent of the relevant

⁶ Shiran, 'Settlement Policy', 227.

age-group.⁶ Those who reached the kibbutz were thinned out even further by a process of selection and training: an élite within this élite. With the beginning of mass immigration, whole communities began to reach the country—decimated by the war and the Holocaust, but in circumstances which were very far removed from the selective processes of the youth movements and the Palmach. It was inevitable, therefore, that any attempt to recruit directly from among the new immigrants would attract only a small proportion; and the huge potential of east European Jewry, from which the kibbutz movements had previously filled their ranks, no longer existed. The relationship between the kibbutz and the outside world had entered a new, and very much less favourable, phase, which was expressed dramatically in the rapid decline of the kibbutzim's share in the population from 7.6 per cent in May 1948 to about 5 per cent in 1952. The next decade was to see a slow and reluctant process of adjustment to this new situation.

Although these factors were not always clear to those engaged in the day-to-day struggle to attract and retain large numbers of new immigrants, they were very conscious that, seen objectively, the obstacles were immense. A report to the 1949 Kibbutz Me'uhad conference enumerated them: 'The lack of Zionist and pioneering consciousness among the immigrants; fear of collective living, which raises associations of the [concentration] camp and the kolkhoz; the immigrants' lack of knowledge of ways of making a living in the rural sector and their consequent tendency to settle in town.'⁷ Others added that most of those who had survived the Holocaust were in no psychological or, frequently, physical condition to join a movement deeply imbued with the ethos of pioneering and self-sacrifice. The problem of attracting and keeping immigrants from the Middle Eastern countries, after the reserve of graduates of the pioneering movements had dried up, was even more difficult. Most had been educated in a family-centred, usually patriarchal, culture, and they showed little understanding of or sympathy for collective life.

All of these reasons for the failure of the kibbutzim to achieve the exalted aims they had set themselves were the result of general trends within Israel and beyond. Others were, or seemed to be, the fault of the kibbutzim themselves. In the course of the same conference, a member of the team recruited by the Kibbutz Me'uhad to work in the absorption camps spoke of the small number sent by the movement to work in the 'Israeli diaspora'—only eight, working with tens of thousands of new

⁶ See *KM* i. 233–5.

⁷ Kibbutz Me'uhad, *Report to Sixteenth Conference*, 96.

immigrants—and contrasted it with the proportionately much greater numbers who had been, and were still being, sent to the youth movements of Europe. These eight men and women had managed to recruit 1,350 people, from thirty-six countries of origin, to fifty-six kibbutzim, by dint of patient and frustrating work, persuading individuals and families that their preconceptions about the kibbutz were mistaken. Their work was hindered by lack of co-operation from the governmental authorities, as well as shortage of manpower, housing, and funds. But in many cases the kibbutzim were also to blame.

You have to understand that the type of person we were able to send to the kibbutzim was limited. They didn't want families with three or four children, or people of 40 years old or more; and those who had reached that age [were only considered if] they were exceptionally proficient at some trade, and had not come from certain countries of origin. We received orders. It may sound strange to you, but the representative of a certain kibbutz, a responsible person, asked us to send young intellectual Czechs or Yugoslavs, with no more than one child—and we had to arrange for their transport from the camp!⁸

The leaders of the kibbutz movements blamed the relative failure to absorb large numbers of immigrants (see Table 7.1) on the post-war relaxation of 'pioneering tension', and it seems that there was no little truth in this contention. But there was also what may be called a structural factor at work. The kibbutz movement was one of the few sectors of the Israeli public which aimed to absorb new immigrants 'into its homes, its work force, its children's houses'.⁹ In other parts of Israeli society—as, for instance, the veteran *moshavot*, in many of which the local authorities refused to provide municipal services for the neighbouring *ma'abarot*—absorption took place alongside the existing sectors rather than within them.¹⁰ As a result, the demands made both of kibbutz society and of the new immigrants led to tensions which proved in many cases to be intolerable. This applied both to the survivors of the Holocaust—including many of those who were recruited through the resuscitated youth movements¹¹—and to the Jews of the Middle Eastern countries, who by 1953 formed half of the new immigration. Thus a great many new immigrants passed through the kibbutzim, but only a relatively small number stayed.

⁸ B. Gamarnik, quoted in Kibbutz Me'uhad, *Sixteenth Conference*, 4th session, bk. 1, pp. 1–12.

⁹ Ya'akov Hazan at the 28th council of the Kibbutz Artzi, 17 June 1949, quoted in Yablonka, *Foreign Brethren*, 156.

¹⁰ Hacohen, *Immigrants in Turmoil*, 253.

¹¹ Yablonka, *Foreign Brethren*, pt. III.

TABLE 7.1 Immigration absorption, 1948-9

	Jewish population, December 1949	Of whom new immigrants	New immigrants as % of Jewish population
Kibbutzim	63,518	9,536	15.0
Moshavim	45,383	16,875	37.2
<i>Moshavim shitufi'im</i>	2,825	981	34.7
<i>Moshavot</i>	99,513	30,258	30.4
Other rural	19,500	16,520	84.7
Towns	696,394	173,263	24.9
TOTAL	930,133	247,433	26.6

Source: Yablonka, *Foreign Brethren*, 284.

There were other reasons for this situation. Accommodation was one of the concrete expressions of the kibbutzim's ability to absorb newcomers. Groups of young pioneers educated in the youth movements were willing to live in tents and to wait for many years until they could move to permanent accommodation, but a family in an immigrant camp considering its next move could scarcely be expected to do so. In these circumstances, the fact that housing budgets and materials allocated by the government and the Jewish Agency were proportionately smaller than those of the moshavim, and frequently arrived late, was of great significance. The leaders of the kibbutz movements believed that this shortage was not the result of objective difficulties, but of deliberate policy.

There is a good deal of evidence that this was so. For example, from mid-1949 all the kibbutz movements attempted to absorb *havurot*, an updated version of the communal groups of the mid-1920s. These were groups of families who were taken in by the kibbutzim for a year, with the promise of a lump sum in payment for their work if they decided to leave at the end of that time. The scheme was only a very partial success, and there seems little doubt that one of the reasons for its failure was the inability of the kibbutzim to make reasonable accommodation available to much larger numbers. In 1949, when the drive to build the *ma'abarot* and clear the immigrant camps was getting under way, Yehiel Duvdevani of kibbutz Giv'at Hashlosha, a member of the Mapai faction in the Knesset, said:

We are all agreed on the value of the transfer of thousands of Jews to agricultural work. In the past few months important work has been done in transferring people to abandoned villages. . . . But there are many opportunities of absorbing more

people in existing agricultural communities. Of 16,000 housing units to be built by Amidar [the Jewish Agency's housing company for new immigrants], only 1,000 are to be built in the agricultural settlements. Is absorption in the agricultural sector any less productive than that in . . . Petah Tikva or Hadera?¹²

The leaders of the kibbutz movements did not believe that the new priorities were only a change of direction prompted by the new reality: the need to find employment and accommodation with all possible speed for the large numbers of people who preferred to live in or near towns. In their eyes they constituted proof that the leaders of the state, the very people on whose support they had counted over the years, had betrayed a long-standing and fully proven ideological tenet—the central role of agricultural settlement, and particularly of the kibbutz, in the process of absorption and nation-building.

There is little doubt that the relative neglect of the kibbutzim in this and other matters was indeed the result of a deliberate change of policy. For many years the Jewish Agency's Settlement Department had been headed by Arthur Ruppin, a firm believer in the priority of agricultural settlement, and its policy had been based on the vision of Jewish Palestine as a largely rural country. A radical change in planning policy came about in 1950 with the adoption of the Sharon Report, which envisaged no more than 20 per cent of the population in the rural sector. But this approach had, in effect, been adopted even before 1948. After Ruppin's death in 1943 he was succeeded by Alfred Bonn . From 1943 to 1948, at Ben-Gurion's request, Bonn  headed a committee of experts which made recommendations on post-war planning policy. Among other things, they suggested allocating clear priority to urban development as the best solution to the problems of the absorption of mass immigration. Ben-Gurion himself often took part in the committee's deliberations, in which 'it became a given that the Jewish state would necessarily be at least 80 per cent urban'.¹³ This was undoubtedly one of the major factors which influenced the practical policy of the Jewish Agency after the establishment of the state.

¹² 'Petah Tikva and Hadera': veteran *moshavot*, now very largely urbanized. Quoted in Tsizling, *Humiliated and Ashamed*, 11. Tsizling also quoted a number of other sources—most of them politically sympathetic to the government—to show that the success of the *havurot* was threatened by the lack of housing, and the failure of government agencies to carry out their promises in this area. *Ibid.* 11–13.

¹³ Troen, 'Transformation of Zionist Planning'. At the end of 1947 a planning commission appointed by Mapai recommended that the proportion of agriculturalists in the Jewish population, then estimated at approximately 19%, should be maintained, even under conditions of mass immigration. Shiran, 'Settlement Policy', 55.

It seems probable, therefore, that greater efforts by the kibbutz members themselves, and stronger encouragement of kibbutz settlement by the authorities, could have led to some increase in the proportion of new immigrants absorbed by the kibbutzim in this most critical period. But such an increase would surely have been quite marginal compared with the basic demographic trends outlined above. The chief element in the proportional decline of the kibbutzim in the State of Israel was neither government policy nor the weaknesses of the kibbutz community. It was the Holocaust, and the changes it had wrought in the Jewish people.

Attrition and Relaxation

In the summer and autumn of 1949 each of the major kibbutz movements held a conference, as soon as the military situation permitted.¹⁴ Despite differences of emphasis and political standpoint, their views of the situation of the kibbutz, and even, in many cases, its causes, were surprisingly similar. The word 'crisis' recurred constantly in all their discussions. All were agreed that the crisis existed, though there was no unanimity about its causes. But there was little disagreement about the existence of two widespread phenomena, now that the pressure of thirteen years' active political and military struggle had abated: a considerable number of people, among them active and concerned members, were leaving the kibbutzim; and among those who stayed there was a perceptible lessening of 'pioneering tension'. The movements' leaders warned of the danger that the kibbutzim would no longer be prepared to make the efforts they once had to absorb new members, to strengthen the youth movements, and to accept Youth Aliya groups. There was a mood of post-war relaxation abroad in the land, and it was affecting the kibbutzim as well as the rest of Israeli society.

One indication of this mood is to be found in the minutes of the conference of Hever Hakvutzot. A major item on the agenda was 'the kibbutz community'. In part, this was the continuation of a discussion about the internal organization of the kibbutz, the relationship between the individual and the community, and methods of distributing consumer goods, which had been occupying the movement's central bodies for several years.¹⁵ But many of the participants used the opportunity to demand a rise in the material standard of living of the ordinary member,

¹⁴ Hever Hakvutzot: in the Zevulun bloc, 15-19 Apr. 1949; Kibbutz Artzi: at Nir David, 17-19 June 1949; Kibbutz Me'uhad: at Giv'at Brenner, 18-24 Oct. 1949.

¹⁵ See *KM* i. 382-5, and below, Ch. 10.

both as an end in itself and as a way of combating the wave of 'desertions'. A member of a veteran kibbutz, Ginegar, said:

The situation of the kibbutz makes it necessary to take the individual into account, accepting change without fear of ideological deviation. . . . We must satisfy the needs of the individual [by providing] decent accommodation and reasonable furniture, and reducing his dependence [on the institutions of the kibbutz]. . . . Each generation has its own concepts. Our lives have changed, and the needs of contemporary man are greater and more varied [than they were], and change quickly. . . . We often say that our standard of living is high. But if in a fifteen-year-old kibbutz people are still eating from tin plates, this is a long way from a high standard.¹⁶

Although the discussion in Hever Hakvutzot was more open, and the demands more radical, than those in the other two movements, all displayed similar tendencies. Such assessments of standards of living were inevitably subjective. In one area, however—housing—it is possible to make a rather more objective appraisal of the situation.

The standard of kibbutz housing had improved to some extent since the mid-1930s, when the 'primus' was a common phenomenon and about a third of the members lived in temporary, insanitary, and even dangerous accommodation.¹⁷ But post-war circumstances led to a serious retrogression. In Beit Hashita the veteran members moved into tents in order to provide housing for new immigrants. One of the leaders of the Kibbutz Artzi reported in June 1949 that in order to absorb new members the founding members of one kibbutz were forced to live two families to a room for an extended period. In the Kibbutz Me'uhad's settlements, accommodation meant for veteran members was used to absorb newly arrived immigrants as a result of the delay in building new houses. At Hever Hakvutzot's September 1949 conference there was a demand 'to build reasonable accommodation . . . which will not prove . . . to be unfit for civilized beings'. In 1952 tents were still a common sight in the kibbutzim, and their place was taken by wooden huts only during the following year.¹⁸

It is true that all this took place against the background of massive immigration, and extreme distress among the new arrivals in immigrant camps and *ma'abarot*: compared with conditions in some of these

¹⁶ Moshe Shoshani, Hever Hakvutzot, 1949 Conference, 100.

¹⁷ See *KM* i. 185-7, and above, Ch. 3.

¹⁸ Beit Hashita: Lieblich, *Kibbutz Makom*, 153-4; Kibbutz Artzi: Richard Weintrob, council meeting, 17 June 1949 (minutes in Kibbutz Artzi archives, Giv'at Haviva); Kibbutz Me'uhad: Aryeh Bahir, secretariat, 28 Dec. 1949 (minutes in Kibbutz Me'uhad archives, E'fal); Hever Hakvutzot: Moshe Bitan, *Niv Hakvutza* (Apr. 1950), 69.

supposedly temporary sites, the kibbutz was a privileged society. None the less, Haim Barkai's estimate of the capital stock of the kibbutzim ('community structures, dwellings, and durables') in 1951 shows that at this stage they were worse off than the rest of the country. (£1800 per capita, as against £11,000 for Israelis—Jews and Arabs—as a whole, at 1958 prices).¹⁹ It seems, therefore, that the kibbutzim were still prepared to forgo a rise in their own standard of living, and even to lower it, in order to participate in the national effort to absorb the new Israelis.

This was due in part to the fervent opposition of the leaders of all the kibbutz movements to any relaxation of effort on the part of kibbutz society. But they succeeded in little more than applying a brake to a very powerful social process. This tendency was also expressed in a certain relaxation of moral standards on the part of the kibbutzim at this time, in common with much of the rest of the Israeli population. The abandonment of tens of thousands of Arab homes and other property had left a gap which was not properly filled for some months, until the office of the Custodian of Enemy Property was organized and began to work in the field. During this interregnum a very great deal of property was appropriated by private citizens or groups. A number of kibbutzim, prompted by the shortage of goods and materials in the post-war situation, succumbed to this temptation. Similarly, a few kibbutzim engaged in black market activities during the period of rationing. All of these actions were in clear contradiction to the accepted standards of movement morality, and the perpetrators were stopped and reprimanded, particularly by the puritanical veterans, whenever they were found out. In relation to the number of such acts among the general population those in kibbutzim were few and far between, but the fact that they existed at all gives some indication of the change in atmosphere which came about during the post-war years.²⁰

In matters other than housing, standards of living were dictated partly by the austere criteria adopted by the kibbutzim over the years, partly by their economic circumstances, and partly by the state of the country as a whole. From April 1949 until February 1952 the exigencies of Israel's economic situation led to the imposition of a regime of austerity which affected both town and country. The people of Ginegar continued

¹⁹ Barkai, *Growth Patterns*, 118. See p. xii for exchange rates.

²⁰ Appropriations of enemy property: information given to the author by Ya'akov Shahar, 12 Nov. 1987. He gave a number of examples from Galilee and the Jezre'el valley, and emphasized the role of Assaf Yaguri of kibbutz Yagur in halting the process. Black market: Liebllich, *Kibbutz Makom*, 135–6. Rationing infringements: Segev, 1949, 303–4, and information given to the author by Joseph Lanir of Giv'at Brenner.

to use tin plates for some time, for utensils of a higher standard were unobtainable.

The Failure of Nerve

These developments were accompanied by a phenomenon which was both a cause and a symptom of the crisis. It can, perhaps, best be described in the words by which Gilbert Murray characterized the beginning of the period of decline of the classical Greek religions: a failure of nerve.²¹ Until May 1948 the central objectives of the Yishuv—defence, settlement, the absorption of immigrants, and even the diplomatic and political activities which led to the establishment of the state—had been attained by voluntary bodies, united by a common purpose, but with no statutory power. Now this had changed. The government, with its legal and bureaucratic apparatus, was able to undertake the myriad tasks which had previously been the province of these bodies—foremost among them the kibbutz movement. Doubts were very widely expressed as to whether the kibbutz should continue to fulfil its former functions or, indeed, any function at all. The comparative failure of the kibbutzim to absorb new immigrants intensified these reservations, and introduced an element of uncertainty into the thinking of the rank-and-file kibbutz member.

These doubts were comparatively rarely voiced in the official deliberations of the kibbutz movements. If they were, it was in order to refute them. The words of Kadish Luzinsky (Luz) in the conference of Hever Hakvutzot are typical:

There is no substitute for the kibbutz as a means of settlement. The state has new ways and means, and they are objectively . . . essential to the State of Israel or to any state: the machinery of government, the army, the political parties. But no administrative machinery can replace the pioneering movement, the army is no substitute for workers' settlement, and political parties cannot create new economic benefits or a new type of man.²²

If the kibbutz movement had not succeeded in full measure, this was due partly to the natural weaknesses of its members, partly to historical circumstances beyond their or anybody's control, and partly to the mistaken policies of the government.

Despite these brave words, the arguments which Luz was attempting to rebut had a marked effect. It was not confined to the ideological sphere. Kibbutz members who had, with the agreement of their comrades,

²¹ Murray, *Five Stages*, ch. 4.

²² Hever Hakvutzot, *1949 Conference*, 33.

played important roles as civil servants in the pre-state apparatus of the Zionist movement, the Palmach, or the British army, were now asked to continue their work in the new governmental framework. In many instances it appeared that this was not consonant with continued membership of their kibbutzim. Perhaps the best-known examples are Levi Eshkol of Degania Beit and Pinhas Lavon of Hulda, both of whom had for many years been 'weekend kibbutzniks', working in the Histadrut apparatus and visiting their homes at increasingly rare intervals. It was during this period that these men effectively gave up their membership of their kibbutzim, and established their homes in town. Others who underwent a similar process at this time were Teddy Kollek of Ein Gev, who became the secretary of the prime minister's office and, in later years, mayor of Jerusalem, and Gid'on Raphael of Hazore'a, who had worked on the organization of illegal immigration during and after the Second World War, and entered the diplomatic service in 1948. But these are only the best known of hundreds, possibly thousands, of kibbutz members who followed similar courses, though at lower levels. While a great many people managed to combine public activities with kibbutz membership, throughout this period and after it,²³ hundreds of members, among them key figures in their communities, left the kibbutzim at this time.

This process was in large part the result of the new opportunities and challenges offered by the creation of the state, particularly in the army and in various branches of public service. These prospects for social mobility were particularly tempting to the graduates of the Israeli youth movements and the Palmach. Their example was followed by large numbers of youth movement graduates already living in young kibbutzim or settlement groups, who left in order to pursue a career in the government, the army, and other parts of the new apparatus of the state.

THE KIBBUTZ IN THE STATE

The kibbutz movement had entered the period of statehood with high hopes and high demands of itself, in the expectation that it would con-

²³ For instance: Shaul Avigur of Kinneret, head of the Mossad; Yitzhak Ben-Aharon of Giv'at Haim and Israel Bar-Yehuda of Yagur, both leaders of the Ahdut Ha'avoda party and office-holders in successive governments; Baruch Azania of Giv'at Haim, for many years a Knesset member; Haim Gvati of Gvat, secretary-general of the Ministry of Agriculture, and later minister of agriculture; Kadish Luz of Degania Beit, minister of agriculture and later Speaker of the Knesset; and Aharon Tsizling of Ein Harod, minister of agriculture and later active in the administration of Youth Aliya.

tinue to play a central role in the state, as it had done in the Yishuv. It was not alone in this assumption. In April 1949 Ben-Gurion said that 'the role of the kibbutz in the state is not past. On the contrary, it has expanded to include settlement, security, the government, the Knesset, the civil service, absorption of immigrants, the conquest of sea and air, construction in the desert, and the ingathering of the exiles.'²⁴ Such a positive appraisal is, perhaps, not surprising at the end of what Ben-Gurion described as the 'annus mirabilis' of the war, during which the kibbutzim had shown a high degree of heroism and the ability to continue the tradition of strategic settlement. But, as we have seen, at this very moment the kibbutz movement had reached a peak which it could not maintain. It was not only unable to fulfil Ben-Gurion's—and its own—expectations, but had to struggle hard in order to preserve its place in Israeli society.

In this speech Ben-Gurion defined succinctly the needs of the new state. In principle, there were none of them which the kibbutzim were unwilling to fulfil. They had been engaged intensively in settlement, security, absorption of immigrants, conquest of the desert, and ingathering of the exiles for the past dozen years—indeed, in many of them since their very inception. As for political and administrative tasks, these were no different in principle from the 'missions' in the Histadrut, the Hagana, the Mossad, and the political parties in which kibbutz members had taken part throughout the previous decade: such figures as Levi Eshkol, Yitzhak Ben-Aharon, and Enzo Sereni had undertaken assignments outside their own kibbutzim with the assent of their own communities and the encouragement of the kibbutz movements. Thus, the 'failure of nerve' did not result from a change in the demands made by the state on the kibbutz movement, or reluctance to comply with them. It was the outcome not of unwillingness, but of weakness.

This is well exemplified in the matter of security. The theme of the spokesmen of the kibbutz movement in the early post-war period was simple: 'nothing has changed'.

There is no better means of defence than the kibbutz. If the kibbutz had not existed, it would have had to be created in order to defend the State of Israel. A tiny land, surrounded on all sides by enemies, a land which is all borders, can only be defended by hundreds of villages, each of them a fortress. This combination of settlement and military defence turns this country into one of the best-defended states in the world, for every valley and every hill is a stronghold on permanent alert.²⁵

²⁴ Ben-Gurion, *Vision and Way*, i. 99–100.

²⁵ Ze'ev Goldberg, in Hever Hakvutzot, 1949 Conference, 16.

In principle these arguments were accepted by the whole of the military and political establishment: the concept of 'decentralizing the population' was a cliché of social thought at the time, and the new settlements of 1948-9 had fulfilled precisely the functions defined here.²⁶ But from 1949 onwards the recruitment crisis drastically curtailed the ability of the kibbutzim to carry out this task, the lion's share of which was now taken up by moshavim and development towns. By the mid-1950s it was chiefly the continued existence of kibbutzim which had been founded in strategic locations in earlier periods that justified the kibbutz's claim to be a vital element in the defence of the state. And many of these were themselves in urgent need of reinforcement. The most that could be hoped for was adequate maintenance of the existing network of kibbutzim—certainly not any significant measure of expansion. The goals had not changed, but the kibbutz movement could no longer attain them.

Within the kibbutz movement this contrast between will and ability led to bewilderment and, in many cases, disillusionment. Outside it, there began a process of ideological revision which in its turn reinforced these tendencies among the kibbutz members themselves.

Mamlachtiut

At Hever Hakvutzot's 1949 conference Kadish Luz, the movement's most prominent leader, said: 'In recent years the sympathetic attitude [of the Israeli public to the kibbutz] has been replaced by indifference at the best, and sometimes even by hostility.' It was to be expected, he said, that the anti-socialist sectors of the Yishuv should adopt this approach. But, he went on,

It is infinitely harder to understand the change in the attitude of the workers' movement. For some reason, the kibbutz no longer has the same lustre in the eyes of the public as it used to. One feels a desire to belittle it, and emphasize its blemishes. . . . On the most distinguished public platforms one hears grave accusations and pessimistic prophecies about the kibbutz movement.²⁷

'The most distinguished public platforms' included those from which Ben-Gurion spoke. Later in the day on which the above remarks were

²⁶ Assnat Shiran has described in detail the way in which, despite initial doubts as to the value of settlement in time of war, the events of the War of Independence convinced the defence establishment that Jewish villages, and particularly kibbutzim, were a most effective factor in defence. Shiran, 'Settlement Policy', pt. 2.

²⁷ Hever Hakvutzot, *1949 Conference*, 33.

made, he addressed the conference. After a lengthy tribute to the role of the kibbutz in building and defending the Yishuv and the state he emphasized, in words very similar to those of earlier speakers, the continued need for voluntary effort and the pioneering virtues for the development of the state. All this was, in effect, no more than the conventional wisdom of the vast majority in the labour movement. But he continued with a trenchant attack on the kibbutz movement. It was not contributing to the absorption of new immigrants to its full ability, he claimed. Its members had found their way to the refugees in the camps of Germany and Cyprus. But, now that these people were living in the transit camps of Israel,

Nobody goes to them: not townsfolk—neither students nor older people nor young teachers; and not people from the workers' settlements. . . . This is, perhaps, the most bitter disappointment of recent days. It cannot be put right by the state, only by you, people of the kibbutzim and moshavim and the pioneering youth. You must go to the new immigrants, tell them what you did, how you built, what were the difficulties you overcame, what they must do and how you can help them. The few people who have actually done this came from the moshavim, and they have been of great help. But why are they so few?²⁸

Both the tone and the content of this speech were repeated on many occasions in the coming years: the kibbutzim were failing to live up to their pioneering tradition, and were falling behind the moshavim in the effort to absorb new immigrants. Ben-Gurion used these and other failings to develop an all-out attack on the kibbutz movement. His views were expressed most forcefully in a speech in the Knesset in January 1950, which became the focus of a bitter controversy:

I should like to speak not as prime minister, but as a pioneer. . . . The [kibbutz] movement which asserts the value of pioneering has never been as disappointing as it is in this respect. Where is the movement to meet the new immigrants, where is the pioneering element that will deal with immigration? Thousands of pioneers have done great deeds in their farms and their kibbutzim. What have they done for the immigrants? For the *aliya*²⁹ of their homes, their farms, their kibbutzim—yes! But what have they done for three hundred thousand Jews? During the past two years I have been humiliated and ashamed. I speak as one of the pioneers, and I ask: 'What have they done?' . . . There has never been such a failure; I am humiliated and ashamed. True, they share their bed and their bread with those who join their kibbutzim. But what about those who don't want to go

²⁸ Ibid. 96.

²⁹ There is an untranslatable pun here: *aliya* (lit. ascent) means both immigration and improvement.

to the kibbutzim, who want to be simple farm-workers—how are they being absorbed? What is the attitude towards them? The very values of pioneering are being called into question—and I know what pioneering used to be!³⁰

The combined message of Ben-Gurion's two speeches is clear. In his view, the failure of the kibbutz movement in the effort to absorb new immigrants was not the result of objective conditions or of government policy, but of the unwillingness of the kibbutz members to apply themselves to the problem in the proper fashion. They should recognize that most of the new Israelis would not join kibbutzim, and devote themselves to educational activities such as teaching Hebrew, promoting good citizenship in the new state, and giving agricultural training.

These speeches, and many others in similar vein, express a fundamental difference of attitude between Ben-Gurion and almost all sectors of the kibbutz movement. Since the mid-1920s Ben-Gurion had been advocating the principle of centralism: he had worked consistently to establish control by the Histadrut, Mapai, and the Zionist movement over their constituent, and frequently centrifugal, sectors. Now this principle was embodied in a concept which came to be known as *mamlachtiut*.³¹ This doctrine—more properly, this approach, for it was expressed more in practical policies than in explicit theoretical terms—stressed the change which had come over the Yishuv with the establishment of the State of Israel. National objectives such as security, agricultural settlement, and the absorption of immigrants, once the sphere of voluntary bodies such as the kibbutzim, could now be attained through governmental and quasi-governmental bodies: the army, the agricultural and other ministries, and the Jewish Agency. Thus, it was said, many of the principles and institutions that had been established by the labour movement over the years had become obsolete and, indeed, harmful. The disbanding of the dissident military organizations and the Palmach was only the first shot in an extended battle for the acceptance of this principle. Others were the control of the pioneering youth movements by the Jewish Agency rather than the Histadrut; absorption of the Histadrut's educational network into the state-controlled system; an unsuccessful attempt to replace the existing youth movements by the army's youth corps, the

³⁰ Knesset report, 16 Jan. 1950.

³¹ After much thought I have retained the Hebrew word for this concept, after considering 'étatism', 'statism', and 'governmentalism'. Each of these concepts, while approximating to *mamlachtrut*, has its own associations, foreign to the Hebrew word; and none of them catches its semantic overtones, with its hint of the grandeur of the biblical Kingdom of Israel. For an illuminating discussion of this aspect of the concept, see Don-Yehiya, 'Political Religion'.

Gadna; the banning of the use of school buildings by youth movements other than the supposedly non-political Scouts; and the demand that the kibbutz movements employ hired labour in order to relieve the problem of unemployment among new immigrants.³²

This conflict was expressed in even more extreme fashion in a wide-ranging public discussion of the nature and function of pioneering in the state.³³ Until now, this prestigious term had been used to describe the youth movements such as Hechalutz (The Pioneer), and their graduates who had settled in kibbutzim and moshavim. In the early 1950s Ben-Gurion and others made a deliberate attempt to give it a more general connotation.

Now we have a new and most valuable sector: the civil service of the State of Israel. It stands in need of all the special characteristics required by civil servants anywhere and at any time—ability, assiduousness, and loyalty. But these are not enough. Fate has imposed on the State of Israel a heavy burden unparalleled in any other state . . . the threefold burden of defence, absorption of immigrants, and settlement. . . . Our generation will be judged by the way it carries out these tasks. What cannot be done by way of routine can be done by a pioneering impetus. Pioneering initiative and perpetual volunteering activity are demanded from each one of us, so that we may be worthy of this great hour in the history of our people.³⁴

It need scarcely be said that the transfer of the honorific terms 'pioneer' and 'volunteer' from their traditional bearers—the labour movement, and particularly the kibbutz—to the despised 'officials' was considered by the vast majority of kibbutz members, and by many outside the kibbutz movement, to be positively insulting. In less emotional terms, it again expressed the central idea of the concept of *mamlachtiut*: the centre of action was no longer in voluntary bodies such as the kibbutz movements, the Histadrut, and the political parties, but in the machinery of government. That was where the most vital decisions would be made, and that was where the best human resources in the state had to be invested.

Almost all the leaders of the kibbutz movements, including those who supported Ben-Gurion politically, rejected the governmental approach, while not always opposing his specific policies. Though they recognized the importance of the state apparatus, they believed that the

³² Asaf, 'Political Conflict', 118–28; Zameret, *The Melting-Pot*; Nishri, 'Governmental Youth Movement'. On hired labour see below, Ch. 9.

³³ For a fuller discussion of this question, see Near, 'Pioneers and Pioneering'.

³⁴ Ben-Gurion, 'Objectives', 9, 22. Another English version is given in an appendix to the *Government Yearbook 1951/2*, 1–42.

kibbutz was still of crucial importance. In their view such measures as the allocation of budgets for building and absorption to other forms of settlement showed, no less than Ben-Gurion's reproaches, that the government did not agree. In his approach to the question of social integration of new immigrants, Ben-Gurion's attitude was basically paternalistic: they were to be helped, educated, and shown how to be like the veteran Israelis. As we have seen, all of the kibbutz movements were prepared to do much more than this; and this willingness stemmed from their conviction, which Ben-Gurion apparently no longer shared, that the strengthening of the kibbutz movement was essential to the proper development of the state. Similarly, most of the kibbutz leaders believed that the dangers involved in the employment of hired labour far outweighed the good it might do; but this assumed that it was vital to Israeli society to preserve the fabric of the kibbutz communities, with their principle of 'self-labour'.

Ben-Gurion had not changed his basic attitude since the early 1930s, when he emphasized the responsibility of the kibbutzim to send their members to work in Mapai and the Histadrut, as against their own priority—building up the kibbutz society and economy.³⁵ Now, as then, he demanded that they play an ancillary part in the execution of policies determined by a central authority. But the kibbutz leaders still believed that their own constructive work was the key to the advancement of the Zionist enterprise.

Politics

With hindsight it seems clear that the realities of post-war Israel were bound to lead to a decline of the standing of the kibbutz within the state. It took a long time for the kibbutz movements to reconcile themselves to this fact. Indeed, for several years their leaders did little more than repeat that the kibbutz was no less important now than in the past. This reluctance to rethink traditional positions was common to all the movements. But it was difficult to conduct a discussion of basic issues against the background of growing hostility between Mapam and Mapai within the movements and outside them. To those outside the Mapai establishment it looked as if *mamlachtiut* was simply a disguised attempt to ensure the party's dominance; for those inside it, any sort of opposition smacked of disloyalty to the state and its leader, and fostered divisiveness in a people who were traditionally subject to that vice. The fact that the great

³⁵ Near, *Kibbutz and Society*, 382 n. 69.

majority of the kibbutz movements' members supported a party which Ben-Gurion and his allies viewed as potentially, if not actually, subversive led him to attack the kibbutz movement as a whole, and not only the Mapam majority within it. This reinforced the suspicion that the Mapai establishment was discriminating against the kibbutz ideal itself, and not only those movements which supported Mapam—a suspicion which was not unfounded. Thus the political element added to the discussion on absorption policy and the place of the kibbutz in the state a dimension of hostility and mistrust which made it virtually impossible to consider the issues dispassionately. These factors and their historical consequences are analysed in Chapter 8.

SOLUTIONS

During the 1950s some of the problems I have described were solved, at least in part; others remained, and still plague the kibbutz movement today. Slowly and painfully, the kibbutzim adapted to the new situation, and recovered from the shock of the post-state crisis to no small degree.

In their attempt to deal with the recruitment crisis all the kibbutz movements continued to work in the traditional frameworks of the pioneering youth movements and Youth Aliya.³⁶ Towards the end of the decade there was a gradual change in the composition of Youth Aliya groups, as the proportion of immigrants declined and the number of underprivileged young people from Israeli towns steadily increased.³⁷

The pioneering youth movements in the countries of the West, including Israel, continued to develop, and to adapt their educational programmes to the new situation arising from the creation of the state. The Ihud (Ihud Hakvutzot Vehakibbutzim: Union of Kvutzot and Kibbutzim), which enjoyed the support of the Mapai-controlled establishment in the government and the Histadrut, was rather more successful in this than the other movements. There were also several attempts to use 'unconventional' methods of absorption. The *havurot* have already been mentioned, and in the mid-1950s the Histadrut sponsored a movement 'from town to country'. But, although some of these activities had a

³⁶ During the year 1948/9 8,000 young people were absorbed into the kibbutzim in the framework of Youth Aliya. Hacothen, *Immigrants in Turmoil*, 138.

³⁷ In 1957/8 14% of those admitted to Youth Aliya groups had been born in Israel; by 1967/8 this figure had reached almost 40%, and on top of this 15% had been between four and ten years in Israel at the time of their admission. Wolins and Gottesman, *Group Care*, 14.

certain degree of success, they made little difference to the general trend of relative decline in numbers.

This failure was mitigated to some degree by two factors: Youth Aliya supplied a small but significant stream of new members; and the Nahal turned out in the long run to be the salvation of the kibbutz movement, providing a much-needed source of temporary and permanent manpower at a time when this was vitally needed. Between 1952 and 1961 rather more than 20,000 soldiers passed through the Nahal, in 684 settlement groups, and each of them spent between twenty and twenty-four months working in kibbutzim. Graduates of the Nahal established eight of the ten kibbutzim founded between 1954 and 1961,³⁸ and it became the prime agent combating the crisis of recruitment. Though its effectiveness was undoubtedly limited, it enabled the kibbutz movements to maintain themselves during this critical period, and to achieve a modest degree of expansion.

None the less, the general conclusion is quite clear: there was no long-term solution to this, the most fundamental aspect of the post-state crisis for the kibbutz movements. It may be that with greater governmental support and sympathy they would have been able to increase their numbers more—perhaps even to the point where they could have approached their pre-war proportion of the Jewish population. If, for instance, the Jewish Agency had attempted to settle new immigrants in kibbutzim in the semi-voluntary manner in which they were settled in moshavim, a significant proportion might have stayed, perhaps adapting the social structure of the kibbutz to their own needs and propensities. In view of the social and historical forces at work, this seems unlikely. But the fact that this and other imaginative solutions were never tried was the result both of the kibbutz movements' conservatism and preoccupation with political questions and, no less, of government policy.

In the event, although the population of the kibbutzim grew steadily, its proportion in the Jewish population of Israel declined continuously, from 6.3 per cent in 1949 to 3.6 per cent in 1960. The verdict has to be that none of the solutions to the recruitment crisis, with the very partial exceptions of the Nahal and the absorption of Youth Aliya groups, was really successful.

On the other hand, the final historical assessment must make a distinction between recruitment and absorption—a distinction which was scarcely made, and certainly not emphasized, at the time. Although the efforts of the kibbutzim to recruit a high proportion of the new immi-

³⁸ Douer, *Nahal Groups*, 8, 10.

grants must be judged a failure, there can be no doubt that even a short period of education in a youth movement, and/or a few months or years in a kibbutz, eased the process of absorption and acculturation in Israeli society, and imbued the newcomers with something of the social ethos of the new state. There is no way of reckoning how many people underwent this process, or of estimating exactly how it influenced them. But it can scarcely be doubted that the kibbutzim made a serious, though partly involuntary, contribution to immigrant absorption. Similarly, the very existence of the Nahal was a function of the support given by the kibbutzim to the youth movements. Their influence on several generations of young people, from Israel and the Diaspora, extended far beyond those who joined kibbutzim and remained in them permanently.

Living Standards

From the end of the austerity period marked by the liberalization of the economy in 1952–3 the living standards of the kibbutzim began to improve. By 1954 the size of a room for a veteran couple was 25–30 square metres, as against 12 square metres in 1947. In the kibbutz movements generally the kibbutzim's 'consumer stock' per head caught up with that of the rest of Israel, and by 1958 had reached £12,300, as against £11,700 in the general population. Expenditure on other consumer items also grew steadily, although it remained below the national average until some time in the mid-1960s. Slowly, but quite perceptibly, the demands voiced in 1949 were having their effect.³⁹

It is tempting to attribute this change simply to the altered conditions of the time, the post-war atmosphere in Israeli society, and the steady improvement in the economic situation of the kibbutzim during the 1960s. But a closer look at the history of the kibbutz may put the matter in a different light. Since the period of the tower and stockade settlements (1937–9) the kibbutz had been seen—and had seen itself—as the embodiment of the most exalted values and aspirations of the Yishuv. This had not always been so. In the period of prosperity from 1932 to 1936 the kibbutzim represented a counter-culture, rejecting the trends of rising living standards and urban development prevalent in the Yishuv: they engaged in work of national importance rather than more profitable alternatives, ploughed back increased profits into investments, and preferred increased absorption to a rise in living standards. As a result, a

³⁹ Shatil, *Economy*, 319; Barkai, *Growth Patterns*, 118, 158. Consumer stock includes living-quarters and other buildings not used for production, such as dining-halls, schools, and children's quarters. See p. xii for exchange rates.

high proportion of those who reached the country through the training kibbutzim left the kibbutz for more inviting conditions elsewhere on arrival in Palestine, or shortly after. The kibbutz movements maintained, and even slightly increased, their proportion in the Yishuv because they were able to replenish their ranks from Hechalutz and the other youth movements.⁴⁰ In the 1950s, as in this earlier period, the values of the kibbutz movement were strongly opposed to those held in practice (though often not in theory) by the surrounding society. But, without the backing of massive youth movements, it could not make up for the attrition which would inevitably have resulted from a rigid adherence to its pristine pioneering values. In order to prevent even greater decline in its numbers, it was forced to compromise. In this sense, therefore, the rise in standards of living was one of the outcomes of the recruitment crisis—and, indirectly, of the destruction of manpower reserves in the Holocaust.

The rise in physical standards of living was also a spin-off from the increase in the productivity and, consequently, the profitability, of the kibbutz economy. This was the result of a combination of factors: the know-how and experience of the veteran farmers; the great expansion of irrigation which took place during the 1950s; in the young kibbutzim, a high level of motivation, early training on veteran kibbutzim or in training farms, and help and advice from the kibbutz movements; and, perhaps most important, the vast increase in land holdings as the result of the War of Independence and the flight of the Arabs. Moreover, the kibbutzim with industrial enterprises were mostly engaged in the food-processing industries, and there was a wide demand for their products. Thus, although such factors as scarcity of working capital and high production costs inhibited their progress, most kibbutzim gradually increased their efficiency and profitability. Under such circumstances, the demand for a rise in the standard of living could not be resisted.

Raising living standards did not necessarily mean changing the organizational arrangements for the distribution of goods and services, though the two issues were often seen to be connected. In such matters as the introduction of 'personal' budgets (by allocating a fixed sum to individual members) and arrangements for children's accommodation Hever Hakvutzot (after 1951 the Ihud: see Chapter 8) was more flexible than the other two movements, whose leaders demanded unwavering allegiance to the principles and practices of the 'classic' kibbutz.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Near, *Kibbutz and Society*, 221–2.

⁴¹ Ben-Avram, *Hever Hakvutzot*, 220–31; Tsur, *Settlement*, iii. 34. See also the more detailed account in Ch. 10 below.

According to these principles, the changes which were now introduced with increasing frequency in the Ihud were rank heresy; indeed, they can certainly be interpreted as a weakening of kibbutz ideology. But they can also be seen as an alternative to the élitist attitude of the Mapam-oriented movements, whose leaders were prepared to sacrifice the comfort of their members—and, thereby, to lose many of them—for the sake of ideological purity. The Ihud, on the other hand, was prepared to give more consideration to its members' desires, and thereby to enlarge its numbers. In a new context, and with much more modest pretensions, the Ihud had inherited the Kibbutz Me'uhad's principle of the 'great and growing kibbutz'.

Each of the movements also developed its own approach to one of the major social questions of the early 1950s. Many kibbutz members had suffered directly and indirectly from Nazi persecution. In addition to the large sums allocated to various Jewish organizations and the Israeli government, the reparations agreement with West Germany provided for compensation to individuals. It was widely feared that the large number of kibbutz members entitled to sums which were very large by the standards of the time might be tempted to leave the kibbutz, or stay, but live at a higher standard than their comrades. All of the movements adhered to the principle that no kibbutz member could own private property: lump sums and annuities had to be assigned to the central kibbutz treasury, though the members concerned were entitled to a 'one-time benefit' such as a journey abroad, new furnishings, or other domestic equipment. However, the more liberal Ihud added the proviso that the money passed on to the kibbutz should be returned to any members who left the kibbutz within five years. The Kibbutz Artzi rejected this approach, but ruled that individual reparation payments should be used to improve the living standard of the whole community: many kibbutzim of this movement built new dining-halls, swimming-pools, or club-houses for the members. The kibbutzim of the Kibbutz Me'uhad, by contrast, usually used this money for investment or to pay off loans.

In sum, however, the differences between the kibbutz movements were not as great as the similarities. For in none of them was there a 'wave of desertions', as the pessimists predicted: all in all, very few members left the kibbutz as a result of receiving reparations. This was widely—and, no doubt, rightly—seen as a proof of the strength of the kibbutz community and its members' satisfaction with their way of life.⁴²

This was only one instance of the fact that, despite variations in technique and in ideological emphasis, there was an underlying similarity

⁴² Gil'adi, 'Personal Reparations Payments'.

between the processes which took place in the different movements. Similarly, all of the movements enjoyed a steady rise in their standard of living, as evidenced in the figures quoted above. Moreover, although kibbutz members were still materially less well off than many townspeople or moshav members of similar social origins, their standards were certainly higher than those of the development towns, the *ma'abarot*, and most of the new moshavim. But, although the kibbutz was presented in its ideology and rhetoric as a working-class society by definition, the reference group of most ordinary kibbutz members—those with whom they naturally compared themselves—consisted of precisely those social strata in the towns who were now becoming prosperous as Israel developed its economy. All these factors led them to ignore or play down their relative affluence. It was only during the 1960s that kibbutz members began to see themselves as part of the affluent, mainly Ashkenazi, sector of Israeli society.

On the whole, therefore, the standard of living crisis was solved by the gradual modification of the widely accepted image (and self-image) of the kibbutznik as an ascetic by choice. But this was accompanied by the development of differentials in standards of living within Israeli society which cast doubt on the traditional claim of the kibbutz to be part of the working class.

Settlement and Defence

From 1953 onwards, with the growing realization that the failure of the kibbutzim in the matter of mass absorption stemmed from deep-seated historical causes, complaints of lack of government support for kibbutz settlement were heard much more rarely. More typical were the words of one of the leaders of the Ihud in 1953: 'We have become used to making do with the creation of one new kibbutz every two years. If we want to see ourselves as a colonizing movement which will build up the state—our chances are small indeed.'⁴³ All the movements had their hands full enough with small kibbutzim, mostly founded in the early years of the state, which were crying out for reinforcement.

Questions of settlement were intimately bound up with those of defence. Again, it was the Nahal which enabled the kibbutz movements to claim that they had a distinctive role to play in these areas, in terms of both military operations and strategic settlement, for it eventually led to a modest renewal of settlement through the establishment of thirty-four

⁴³ Y. Duvdevani, in a meeting at Beit Berl, 6 Aug. 1953. Ihud archives, Hulda, 9/187.

he'ahzuyot Nahal—farms established by the army in militarily sensitive spots, and run by a Nahal unit which combined farming with its military duties. Eight of these subsequently became kibbutzim. Some 30 per cent of the *gar'inim* formed at this time were made up of graduates of Youth Aliya who joined the Nahal as groups: 35 per cent were made up of graduates of Israeli pioneering movements, and the members of several more came from youth movements in the Diaspora. Thus, the background of the overwhelming majority was connected with the kibbutz movement; and so was the general spirit of the corps, and its civilian and military administration.

The Nahal was therefore a significant though far from complete solution to three of the problems which plagued the kibbutz movement from 1949 onwards: manpower, defence, and settlement. It should be added, however, that its existence was far from secure. From a very early stage its value was questioned by the military authorities: indeed, the original intention to use it as an educational tool throughout the whole of the army was frustrated by the military establishment from its inception.⁴⁴ The kibbutz movements (and particularly the Ihud) had to exercise constant vigilance, and often exerted considerable political pressure, to ensure its continued existence.⁴⁵ In a situation of constant tension, when the defence forces were still in their early stages of development, the General Staff found it difficult to accept the existence of an élite corps much of whose military service was spent in what were essentially civilian occupations. Moreover, by the mid-1950s it was clear that a significant proportion of Nahal soldiers would leave the kibbutzim at the time of their release from the IDF, or shortly afterwards.⁴⁶ The Nahal was of great importance in providing the day-to-day manpower needs of the kibbutzim, but its contribution to expansion of permanent settlement was gravely limited. Moreover, from about 1953 onwards there began to crystallize within the Israeli defence establishment the doctrine that any future war must be fought on Israeli territory but on the enemy's soil—a view which led to the devaluation of the concept of settlement as a factor in military planning.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Drori, 'Utopia in Uniform', 606–9.

⁴⁵ During the 1950s changes in the organization of the Nahal, usually designed to reduce the proportion of non-military activities undertaken during the soldiers' military service, were frequently discussed in the secretariat of the Ihud, and often modified or rescinded by a direct appeal to the minister of defence (Ben-Gurion or Lavon). Minutes of Ihud secretariat, in Ihud archives, Hulda: 21 Nov. 1952, 27 May 1953, 8 Oct. 1953, 16 Nov. 1953, 6 Nov. 1955.

⁴⁶ Minutes of Ihud secretariat, 6 Nov. 1955.

⁴⁷ Golani, 'The Sinai Campaign', 38–48.

Varieties of Service

One of the sources of strength of the kibbutz movement throughout its history had been its ability to serve the Yishuv and the Zionist movement in the areas which seemed most vital at any given time. We have seen that in some of the central issues of the post-state era it had been found wanting. This led to a rethinking of former ideologies, partly on the initiative of its own leaders, partly under the stimulus of demands and criticism by outsiders. One of Ben-Gurion's main demands, that the kibbutzim should contribute to the absorption of the new immigrants by hiring outside workers, is considered in its historical context in Chapter 9. The other, that kibbutz members should 'go to the new immigrants' and educate them in the values of the Yishuv, has already been mentioned: the kibbutz movements preferred other methods of absorption. However, during this period there were nevertheless many who sought ways of serving the new immigrants by teaching them Hebrew and giving them technical guidance in many spheres. An influential group among the younger generation of the moshavim responded eagerly to Ben-Gurion's call to spend periods of up to a year as instructors in immigrants' moshavim—indeed, some of them anticipated it. Within a year a group of young people from the Ihud had joined them in this work, despite the initial opposition of the leaders of the movement. By 1954 guidance in young moshavim was accepted as a legitimate activity in the framework of the accepted quota of 'movement work'.⁴⁸ Here, as in the spheres of settlement and defence, the kibbutz movements were becoming accustomed to playing a useful role, but one that was far more modest than those their members had fulfilled in previous periods.

SUCCESES AND FAILURES

Although the kibbutzim failed to meet the challenge of mass immigration, the alternatives proposed by Ben-Gurion and his school were not very much more effective. The *ma'abarot*, in which new immigrants were absorbed, not into the neighbouring towns and *moshavot*, but next to them, formed a model for the process. They were kept outside the bounds of existing settlements, and often denied municipal services; their inhabitants developed a relationship of dependence on the existing

⁴⁸ Habass, *Movement without a Name*; Raz, 'Children of the Kvutza', 160-1; id., 'Mobilizing the Second Generation'.

system and its agents; ethnic differences were perpetuated, and reinforced by feelings of resentment and social inferiority. Israel's current ethnic divisions are a continuation of relationships created in the first years of the state's existence.⁴⁹

Both the kibbutzim and the moshavim tried to absorb new immigrants on a large scale. In so far as the kibbutzim succeeded, the newcomers became an integral part of the community, or received adequate preparation for life in Israel within the framework of such schemes as Youth Aliya. But, in comparison to the needs of the country, the numbers were woefully small. The moshavim were much more successful, thanks mainly to the social structure of the moshav, which was more adapted to the social and cultural needs of the new immigrants, but also to the number of young volunteers from the veteran moshavim who lived with the new immigrants during the period of their absorption.⁵⁰ None the less, the overall result of absorption to the moshav movement was the creation of new communities with the economic structure of the veteran moshavim, but with internal cultural patterns and social values of their own: again, absorption not into existing communities, but by their side. As a result, the two types of moshav developed very differently, and there has been—and, indeed, still is—a high degree of social and political tension between them.⁵¹

In broad sociological terms, therefore, neither the kibbutzim nor the other established sectors of Israeli society managed to deal effectively with the problem of immigrant absorption on any level very much deeper than formal admittance to citizenship and integration into the economic system. The kibbutzim were willing to integrate the new immigrants fully into their own communities, but they lacked the numbers, the political strength, and the social flexibility to do so. Other sectors were unwilling or unable to do more than provide conditions for separate development. With hindsight, it seems that the objectives which the kibbutz movements set themselves were more ambitious than those of the policy-makers of the state, but, equally, that in conditions of mass immigration these goals were almost certainly unattainable.

⁴⁹ Hacoen, *Immigrants in Turmoil*, 250–790, 318–22; Segev, *1949*, 139–41; Smooha, *Pluralism and Conflict*.

⁵⁰ Habass, *Movement without a Name*.

⁵¹ Gil'adi, *New Immigrants' Villages*.

Politics and Crisis, 1949–1954

AT first glance the politics of Israel in the early 1950s seem to be mercurial in the extreme. Between May 1948 and November 1955 there were seven governments, only two of which resulted from general elections and a change in the composition of the Knesset. Most were the outcome of coalition crises, often because of friction between Mapai and the religious parties. Yet underlying this series of crises was a remarkable stability. All the coalitions were based on a partnership between Mapai and its Arab partners and one or more of the religious parties, with additional factions from time to time. And, despite the vast demographic changes of these years of mass immigration, there was little change in this basic pattern as a result of the elections to the second Knesset in July 1951 and the third in July 1955. Mapai remained the dominant partner, and Ben-Gurion the dominant figure in Mapai, even during his retirement to Sdeh Boker from December 1953 to February 1955.

There was also something close to a national consensus on a number of fundamental issues. The continued hostility of the Arabs led to terrorist raids from Egypt and Jordan and a series of retaliatory actions by the IDF, culminating in the Suez campaign of October 1956. There were constant disagreements within the leadership of Mapai, particularly between Moshe Sharett and Ben-Gurion; but they rarely reached the public, most of which strongly supported Ben-Gurion's forceful advocacy of security through strength, and an uncompromising attitude towards the Arab states.

By mid-1952 it became clear that the system of austerity, with its stringent rationing and government controls, was breaking down. Helped by loans and grants in aid from the United States, Mapai adopted a policy of economic liberalization, while retaining much of the structure of public ownership and control by governmental agencies and the Histadrut. As a result, there was a gradual rise in standards of living, which helped to blunt the edge of political discontent.

Apart from deep divisions on religious questions the government enjoyed almost unqualified support from most of the population, and from the rank and file of Mapai, including party members in Hever

Hakvutzot and the Kibbutz Me'uhad. But it encountered stubborn resistance in the two main opposition parties—Herut, and Mapam, which was supported by the majority in the Kibbutz Me'uhad and the whole of the Kibbutz Artzi.

Despite its declared aim of reconciliation with the Arab people, Mapam in effect accepted the priorities of Mapai in some of the central matters of security and foreign policy: the need to strengthen the IDF, to fight and deter infiltration, and to hope for a possibility of political negotiations from strength in the undefined future. In home affairs, however, it rejected most of the government's policies. The new economic policy of 1952 was interpreted as the negation of the traditional socialist structure of Israeli society, and the reparations agreement with Germany was criticized as the first step towards reconciliation with a nation unpurged of its Nazi past. In addition, a whole series of issues derived from the principle of *mamlachtiut* served to keep alive the antagonism, often bordering on hatred, which had characterized the relationship between these parties since the Palmach controversy. Mapam viewed *mamlachtiut* not as a means of crystallizing the institutions of the newly created state and mobilizing its resources, but as a way of strengthening and perpetuating the rule of Mapai. Restrictions on the activities of the youth movements (apart from the supposedly non-political Scouts) in the schools, and the absorption of the schools controlled by the Histadrut (the 'workers' stream') into the state-controlled system are two examples of actions which contradicted the fundamental philosophy of the major kibbutz movements and their political party, and directly harmed their interests. These and similar issues widened the gap between Mapai and Mapam to the point where it seemed unbridgeable.

Concomitantly, questions of foreign policy became increasingly prominent. Mapai's public image was of a social democratic party similar in outlook to the British Labour Party, and equally committed to the values of Western parliamentary democracy, while the revolutionary rhetoric of Mapam, and its members' sympathy for the Soviet Union, led them to express increasing identification with 'the world of tomorrow'.

The early moves in the Cold War¹ took place simultaneously with the Yishuv's struggle against the British. During 1949, when Israeli politics were beginning to take shape, the struggle between the great powers entered a new and more active stage. NATO was established, and the Russians strengthened their hold on eastern Europe by show trials in

¹ The Greek civil war and Churchill's 'Iron Curtain' speech (Mar. 1946), the Truman Doctrine (Mar. 1947), and the Marshall Plan (June 1947). McCauley, *Cold War*, 114-25.

Hungary and Bulgaria and the break with Tito in Yugoslavia. In March 1950 the Russians announced that they possessed nuclear weapons, and in June of that year the Korean War erupted.

These events emphasized the perilous state of the world, and the very real possibility of an outbreak of global war. The situation was different from previous wars and threats of war in that the conflict reached deep into the political fabric of nations the world over, and not only of countries divided by borders of occupation or active insurrection. In February 1949 Maurice Thorez, the leader of the French Communist Party, declared that French workers could not be relied on to defend France against the Soviet army, and other European Communist parties followed suit. The international trade union movement split along ideological lines. Culturally and intellectually too, there was a hardening on both sides of the Iron Curtain: increasing adulation of Stalin, as against the spread of McCarthyism.

MAPAM

Mapam's response to the international situation sprang from the traditional pro-Soviet attitude of both its components, Hashomer Hatzair and Ahdut Ha'avoda, and from a change in the nature of kibbutz politics which had come about over the previous decade. In becoming a political party, each of these factions had to some degree loosened the control of the kibbutz movement over its activities. In the case of Ahdut Ha'avoda this tendency was emphasized by the fact that in 1946 it had united with Left Poalei Zion, a closely knit group of urban intellectuals and workers which had little interest in the traditional priorities of the Kibbutz Me'uhad, such as agricultural settlement. Similarly, the urban branches of Hashomer Hatzair were no longer prepared to accept automatically the leadership of the kibbutz sector. They complained that they were discriminated against in such matters as representation in the party's governing bodies and the distribution of civil service posts.²

Although it was originally intended to merge the two bodies which made up the party, they remained separate factions throughout the six years of its united existence. During the War of Independence, when the party's chief efforts were focused on the direction of the war and the

² The workings of the party machinery were further complicated by the fact that each of these three sections—the urban elements of Hashomer Hatzair and Ahdut Ha'avoda, and Left Poalei Zion—retained their separate identities and engaged in a constant struggle for power on the local level. Margalit, *United Left*, 76-8.

struggle over the Palmach, Ahdut Ha'avoda was the leading force within Mapam. After the war, however, the Hashomer Hatzair faction became dominant. The principle of ideological collectivism ensured that this group presented a united front towards the rest of the world, including its partners within Mapam. But both of the factions were in a state of constant internal tension.³

One central point at issue was the question of participation in the government. It seems likely that Ben-Gurion's offer of a place in the coalition of 1949 was half-hearted at best. But at the beginning of 1950, in the crisis engendered by the combination of mass immigration and economic underdevelopment, Mapai made a genuine attempt to broaden its parliamentary base by including Mapam in the governmental coalition. Ahdut Ha'avoda was firmly in favour of accepting the offer, as an expression of the party's readiness to share in the responsibilities of statehood. Meir Ya'ari and Ya'akov Hazan also tended to agree, but by exercising factional discipline the left-wing group in Hashomer Hatzair won the day, and Mapam decided to stay in the political wilderness.⁴ It was to remain there until 1955.

Another issue dividing the two factions at this time was their attitude towards a substantial loan from the United States: it had been accepted by the government as the only way of developing the Israeli economy, which was on the verge of collapse. Ahdut Ha'avoda tended to accept this argument, but the dominant forces in Mapam argued that the American loan was a local version of the Marshall Plan, and would lead to the 'enslavement' of the Israeli economy.⁵ Both the parallel with the world situation, and the belief that Israel's situation *vis-à-vis* the Cold War was the key to policy-making, are typical of the thinking of the Mapam majority at this time.

Despite Hashomer Hatzair's orthodox Marxist ideology there were gradations of opinion within its leadership, ranging from those who wanted the movement to compete with the Communist Party in Israel for recognition by the Cominform to those who emphasized its practical constructive tasks and concentrated mainly on Zionist and Israeli topics. Within Ahdut Ha'avoda there were similar variations. Tabenkin, who set the tone, made much use of the Soviet Union as the paradigm of a socialist state: the emphasis on the ultimate triumph of Communism, and the

³ Ibid. 92-120.

⁴ Mapai secretariat, 28 Aug. 1948, Labour Party archives, Beit Berl, 24/9/2; Tsur, *Partnership or Opposition*, 10-12.

⁵ Kafkafi, *Truth or Faith*, 120.

parallel which he frequently drew with the kibbutz ('the commune') were means of strengthening the morale of his movement, and the readiness of its members to devote themselves to the cause. Others openly demurred at many specific Soviet actions, while rejecting Mapai's anti-Communist stance. But in the rapidly hardening atmosphere of international politics all chose East rather than West.

One of the factors in Mapam's leftward progress was the influence of Moshe Sneh, a brilliant speaker and journalist, who had gradually moved left himself, from the General Zionist party through Mapai and Ahdut Ha'avoda, to become one of the leading figures in the new party. His views derived from an analysis of the world political situation which was shared by an increasing number of his party colleagues. The world was now divided into two forces which would eventually clash—indeed, had begun to do so. The Soviet bloc was destined to triumph, and only by alliance with that bloc could Israel and Zionism hope to survive. In August 1949 Sneh said:

In my view, the hope of Zionism lies in its integrating into the Communist world. . . . It isn't a matter of the days of the Messiah. This means that there will be a war, and the Red Army will reach the entrance to the country, and then we shall send a telegram to say 'We are here.'⁶

In another formulation, Mapam had to become an 'address' for the Soviet Union, in alliance or competition with the existing Communist Party.⁷

These and similar views were current in the Hashomer Hatzair faction from the foundation of Mapam. Many of the veteran leaders, particularly Ya'ari and Hazan, were very wary of a too extreme identification with the Communist line, and continued to emphasize the constructive elements in the party's programme. But the increasing polarization of East and West, the extremism of the younger generation of Hashomer Hatzair, and the personal influence of Sneh and his group, moved the centre of gravity of the faction. The element which sought to become a 'Zionist Communist' movement gradually became dominant.⁸ Issues were increasingly resolved in the spirit of the leftward-leaning forces within the movement; and, true to the principle of ideological collectivism, the leaders faithfully advocated the majority view in their public appear-

⁶ Mapam Political Committee, Aug. 1949. Kibbutz Me'uhad archives, EfaI, 1/13, box 7, notebook 9, 43.

⁷ Kafkañ, *Truth or Faith*, 117.

⁸ This phrase was used by Ya'akov Riftin, one of the most prominent leaders of the left wing in the Kibbutz Arzi: Riftin, 'We and Communism'.

ances, whatever their reservations in the internal debate. Thus, it was Ya'akov Hazan of Mishmar Ha'emek, who had fought against left-wing deviation inside Hashomer Hatzair for more than twenty-five years, who said in the Knesset, following the example of Thorez, that the Soviet Union was the workers' 'second, socialist homeland'.⁹

By the end of 1949 such views were acceptable doctrine in the eyes of the great majority of Mapam members. Their implications were far-reaching. Politically, they meant the adoption of an oppositionist stance in the Knesset and the Histadrut, alliance with the Communist trade union movement, and attempts to win the favour of the Soviet authorities. Ideologically, they meant the adoption of many of the Communists' attitudes, including the cult of Stalinism, the cultural theories of Zhdanov, and the biological doctrines of Lysenko.¹⁰ Militarily, they meant preparation for a Soviet invasion of the Middle East, and the possibility of giving aid and comfort to the Red Army.

Not all members of Mapam were prepared to swallow all of this. Most extreme were the young graduates of the youth movements, who had been educated over the years to accept the image of Soviet Russia as a socialist state, giving inspiration to the workers' movement all over the world. It was this image which dominated Mapam in December 1949 as its members, from the official party newspaper to the local branches in town and kibbutz, celebrated Stalin's seventieth birthday in ceremonies scarcely distinguishable from those of Communist parties the world over.

During 1950 the party increased its activities in the industrial sphere, sometimes in alliance with the Communists. Tabenkin remarked disgustedly that this was a policy of 'strikes instead of kibbutzim'. There was even some truth in the frequently heard accusation that its leaders received orders from Moscow. Left-wing members of both factions in Mapam frequented the Polish and Soviet embassies, and were no doubt well aware of what the Russians wanted, though they did not necessarily comply with their demands.¹¹ The veteran leaders of the Ahdut Ha'avoda faction, who still hankered after their tradition of constructive politics, were trapped in a party of whose policies they were profoundly suspicious.

⁹ Knesset report, 10 Mar. 1949.

¹⁰ Zhdanov and Lysenko were Communist Party officials who received the backing of Stalin in the 1950s—Zhdanov in the cultural sphere, with his support of an extreme version of 'social realism', and Lysenko, who claimed to have altered hereditary factors by changes in the environment of plants, in the biological sciences. The theories of both are now thoroughly discredited.

¹¹ Kafkafi, *Truth or Faith*, 120-2.

Very soon after the establishment of the party, in fact, Tabenkin had ceased for some time to take an active part in its leadership, feeling himself at odds with the controlling Hashomer Hatzair faction.¹²

While they were struggling with these difficulties, the leaders of the Kibbutz Me'uhad were compelled to fight on two different fronts for the unity and control of their politically divided kibbutz movement. Within the Ahdut Ha'avoda faction the left-wing group was becoming increasingly powerful. Under the guidance of Lev Leviteh, one of the founders of Ein Harod and a highly respected intellectual, it gradually increased its influence, particularly in the younger kibbutzim, and moved closer to the policies of the dominant left in Hashomer Hatzair. The leaders of the majority in the Kibbutz Me'uhad fought against this tendency as best they could, but the adulation of the Soviet Union which they themselves had promoted created a dynamic which they were unable to halt.¹³ At the same time, they were struggling to preserve the unity of their movement and neutralize the influence of the Mapai opposition. This process, which had a profound effect on the whole of the kibbutz movement, merits detailed analysis.

THE POLITICS OF THE KIBBUTZ ME'UHAD

1948-1950

After the establishment of Mapam the political struggle within the Kibbutz Me'uhad became increasingly virulent. With the main body of opinion on both sides more or less defined, the question of manpower became crucial. It was expressed in a number of areas: the control of the administrative machinery for distributing new recruits to the kibbutzim; the struggle for influence among the survivors of European Jewry; the political alignment of the youth movements whose graduates joined the Kibbutz Me'uhad; and the ideological education of the younger generation in the kibbutzim.

The destination of the new groups which reached the country in the period of the *briha* was largely a function of the allegiance of the leaders who worked with them in the youth movements in Europe and the Cyprus detention camps. Sending educational emissaries to these movements was, therefore, not only an act of service to the Jewish people and the cause of Zionism. It also served the interests of the kibbutz movements—and, in the case of the Kibbutz Me'uhad, of each of the sectors

¹² Asaf, 'Political Conflict', ch. 7.

¹³ Kafkafi, *Truth or Faith*, 133-44.

of which it was now composed. In the spring of 1945, after some two years of political struggle involving the Jewish Agency, the Histadrut, and the kibbutz movements, separate courses for the preparation of emissaries had been established. Most of the graduates were members of the Kibbutz Me'uhad, each clearly defined in terms of party loyalty: ninety-eight supported Ahdut Ha'avoda, and thirty-two supported Mapai.¹⁴

In the coming years these young men and women played a cardinal role in caring for, leading, and educating the Jews of the *britha*. At the same time, they created groups with personal loyalty to themselves, and an organizational attachment to their faction within the Kibbutz Me'uhad. This is well exemplified in the development of the Kibbutz Me'uhad's youth movement in Hungary.¹⁵ During 1944 and 1945 it was called Dror/Habonim, formed by the union of two pre-war movements—Dror, allied to the majority stream in the Kibbutz Me'uhad, and Habonim, affiliated to Netzah. Though its ideology was based on the classic approach of the Kibbutz Me'uhad, the day-to-day educational work did not go much deeper than belief in Zionism and the kibbutz idea. In January 1946, however, the movement divided into two: Dror, connected with Ahdut Ha'avoda, and Habonim, connected with Mapai.

One of the early symptoms of the coming split was a controversy about whether immigration should be organized in independent *gar'inim* (settlement nuclei) or mixed groups, which would be divided among the kibbutzim of the Kibbutz Me'uhad by its central leadership—a dispute reminiscent of that between the leadership of the Kibbutz Me'uhad and Netzah in the inter-war period.¹⁶ At the same time, the leaders on both sides were organizing the groups under their influence and, when they began their journey to Palestine, assigning them to geographical locations and movements in ways which would ensure their loyalty. While this was often the result of local initiatives on the part of leaders who wanted to strengthen their own kibbutzim, there seems little doubt that it was encouraged by the leadership of both factions in Palestine.

At the final conference before the split, the ideological debate centred on questions such as whether the movement was 'Zionist-socialist' (Mapai) or 'Zionist-Marxist' (Ahdut Ha'avoda). These discussions did

¹⁴ Asaf, 'Political Conflict', 122-8, 140.

¹⁵ The account of developments in Hungary is based mainly on the author's interview with Asher and Haviva Aranyi, May-Oct. 1994. See 'One Couple's Odyssey' in Ch. 4 above.

¹⁶ This was one of the classic disputes between the leadership of the Kibbutz Me'uhad and Netzah in the inter-war period. *KM* i. 226.

little, if anything, to change the participants' opinions: the groups usually stayed loyal to their leaders, adopting their political shibboleths as a matter of course. But the schism also had a social and cultural aspect: many movement members were refugees from Carpatho-Russia, which had been annexed by Hungary during the war; they spoke little Hungarian, but had a deeper grounding in Jewish culture than their Hungarian-born comrades. There was a good deal of alienation and snobbery on both sides, and when the split came the Hungarian groups tended to favour Mapai, and the Carpathians Mapam. Similar geographical and cultural variations were often allied with political and personal loyalties in other regions of the Diaspora.

The fact that the Kibbutz Me'uhad's youth leaders and emissaries were politically divided, and believed their ideology to be an essential part of their message, increased the tension within the youth movements. And the very existence of two sets of people, all chosen as being the most active, loyal, and articulate supporters of their respective parties and trained at special seminars, meant the creation of a new generation of leaders who tended to be more extreme than their elders. The enthusiasm—sometimes even the fanaticism—of the young on both sides was added to the already existing divisive tendencies within the kibbutz movement.

The establishment of the ideological seminars in 1945 and the controversies which accompanied them were in many ways a paradigm of the way in which the Kibbutz Me'uhad was to develop over the coming years. The protests of the minority against the identification of the movement with Ahdut Ha'avoda were met by the claim of the majority to 'comprehensiveness'. Against this argument the minority appealed to the superior comprehensiveness of Mapai, the Histadrut, and the Zionist movement. If the Mapai group failed to achieve its ends, its leaders would threaten to stop paying their dues to the Kibbutz Me'uhad, or to withdraw their members from the administration of the movement. These tactics usually led to some sort of compromise in practice, though the rhetoric of the majority was almost always extreme and uncompromising. Thus between 1945 and 1950 the minority acquired the right to receive manpower allocations in proportion to its existing numbers; to provide leadership and guidance to youth movement and Youth Aliya groups destined for its kibbutzim; and to send a number of youth leaders and emissaries to the youth movements connected with Mapai. The consultations between Mapai members before important meetings of the Kibbutz Me'uhad central council were now institutionalized, and a per-

manent committee was established. Gradually, a shadow administration developed to ensure that the minority supporting Mapai could insist on its rights, and supervise their practical application.¹⁷

The majority was indignant, and sometimes bewildered, at these signs of independence. It beat a gradual retreat in the face of the minority's determination, with both sides reluctant to reach an irrevocable impasse. From the first, however, there were strong tensions within each of the camps. Ben-Gurion and other Mapai leaders urged their supporters in the Kibbutz Me'uhad to take an active line, even at the risk of splitting their movement. Activists in the Ahdut Ha'avoda faction pressed for open politicization of the Kibbutz Me'uhad, both as a counterweight to the town sector within Ahdut Ha'avoda, and in response to leftward pressure from some of their own members.¹⁸ In each camp these pressures were strongly resisted by those whose chief concern was the survival of the kibbutz communities rather than the political struggle.

Politics and Education

These developments influenced and were influenced by parallel changes in the youth movements connected with the Kibbutz Me'uhad. These had a dynamic and an ideological content of their own. By the time of the secession of L'ahdut Ha'avoda from Mapai in 1944, the three biggest youth movements in the Yishuv—the Noar Oved, Hamahanot Ha'olim, and the Scouts—were all educating their members for settlement in the kibbutz. The great majority of the groups formed by their graduates were connected with the Kibbutz Me'uhad, which supplied the senior cadre of youth leaders and organizers and to a large extent controlled educational policy.¹⁹ But the politics of the Yishuv had their effect on the youth movements, and the leaders of the main parties—particularly Berl Katznelson, until his death in 1944—maintained close ties with many of their most influential members. Among the youth leaders from the Kibbutz Me'uhad were several who supported Mapai, and the young people themselves were very much aware of the ideological conflicts in the Yishuv.

¹⁷ Asaf, 'Political Conflict', ch. 6.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* The leading figures among the 'party men' on the Mapai side were the graduates of Netzah, particularly the party activists of kibbutz Afikim, that movement's stronghold (Elik Shomroni, Arie Bahir, Joseph Yizre'eli); prominent on the Mapam side were Yitzhak Ben-Aharon and Lev Leviteh, the ideological leader of the pro-Soviet group in the Kibbutz Me'uhad.

¹⁹ At the end of 1945, of the thirty-two kibbutzim and *pluhot* established by groups of youth movement graduates, twenty-five belonged to the Kibbutz Me'uhad: seventeen of Noar Oved's twenty-three; five of Hamahanot Ha'olim's six; and all three of the Scout movement's settlements. 'Yudke', 'The Kibbutz and Problems of Youth'.

From 1944 onwards the leaders of Mapai exerted increasing pressure on their disciples within the youth movements to form an independent movement loyal to the party. In August 1945 the Mapai minority in the Hamahanot Ha'olim seceded, and, together with Gordonia, formed a new movement known as the Tnu'a Me'uhedet (United Youth Movement). In the Noar Oved and Scout movements the conflict was resolved differently, and with more complex political skirmishing, but by May 1951 each of them had two parallel youth movements, each with its own party affiliation, though they were formally part of the same movement.²⁰

Equally important in the conflict between the parties was the question of education within the kibbutzim. Numerically, the children of the kibbutzim were beginning to constitute an important element in kibbutz society. During the 1940s, fifteen kibbutzim of the Kibbutz Me'uhad had children aged 13 and over, and six had their own schools for this age-group. By 1950 more than a hundred of the second generation were adults and members of their kibbutzim; many had been members of the Hagana and the Palmach, and several had fallen in the War of Independence. While youth movement and Youth Aliya graduates were undoubtedly of great importance in building the kibbutz movement, the children of the kibbutzim were regarded as the cornerstone of their communities' future.

The central educational doctrine of the Kibbutz Me'uhad as it had evolved over the previous two decades was based on an integrative approach whereby the school and all the children's activities were comprised in a single overall framework, which formed an essential part of the kibbutz community.²¹ The growing politicization of the communities now threatened this concept. Tabenkin's views stemmed largely from his belief that education must prepare the young to fulfil the most pressing immediate needs of the kibbutz and the nation. During the dark days of the Second World War, for instance, he had recommended a Spartan educational approach, containing elements of deliberate physical deprivation, and encouragement to hate the enemy.²² From the mid-1940s he urged more overtly political education, and what amounted to politicization of the training of kibbutz teachers, in the framework of the joint teachers' training college of the Kibbutz Me'uhad and the Kibbutz Artzi. His approach was rejected by those working in the field. The great majority of teachers in the college and in the kibbutz high schools were

²⁰ Alon, *Jewish Scouting*, 259-68; Hakhli'i, *Invitation to a Talk*, ch. 7.

²¹ See *KM* i. 238-41.

²² Tabenkin, 'The School and the War', 7-21.

most unwilling to become involved in overt political activity; they realized quite clearly that to do so would be to bring the controversies dividing the kibbutz movement into the classroom, and make it virtually impossible for the school to function as a unified educational authority.²³

In response to Tabenkin's call, a number of educators who supported the leadership gradually developed the 'youth society' in the kibbutzim of the Kibbutz Me'uhad as a separate entity in which the extra-curricular activities of the adolescent children, including their political education, took place.²⁴ The youth leaders, usually themselves kibbutz-born youngsters or graduates of youth movements, were immensely popular, and almost invariably followed the political line of the leaders of the Kibbutz Me'uhad: its social radicalism, the ambience of youth movement and Palmach, and the feeling of identification with 'the way of the movement' had a special appeal to the younger generation. Thus, to their chagrin and frustration, many veteran members of the older kibbutzim saw their children undergoing a process of alienation which they were powerless to stop. Matters such as the distribution of Youth Aliya groups, the division of the youth movements into spheres of influence, even the organization and curriculum of the teachers' training college, could be settled, though with much friction and bad blood, by a mixture of compromise and pragmatic separation of functions. Here, however, was a question over which it was much more difficult—emotionally, practically, and educationally—to find a *modus vivendi*. In fact, as we shall see, none was found.

1950-1951

As the rift between Mapai and Mapam became deeper, the active supporters of both parties within the Kibbutz Me'uhad became more uncompromising. It was becoming clear that there was a very real danger of a split in the movement. Many of the moves made by both sides from 1949 onwards, when Mapam adopted a clearly oppositionist stance in national politics, were directed at winning over the few unconverted, and laying the blame for any resulting split at the door of the rival faction.

There were a number of potentially explosive points in the organizational set-up. In the politically mixed kibbutzim there was constant jockeying for position over such matters as work allocation and election to the various committees and administrative posts. In those where the

²³ Kafka, *Truth or Faith*, 78-9.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 79-80; Asaf, 'Political Conflict', chs. 4-7.

party groupings were more or less equal, any suggestion that the balance of forces should be changed by accepting new groups with a defined political identity from the youth movement or the Nahal could bring matters to a head. In the veteran kibbutzim, questions of education became a festering wound.²⁵

Two kibbutzim had already divided along party lines in the wake of the War of Independence. The members of Beit Ha'arava, on the northern shore of the Dead Sea, who had been evacuated in the course of the war, founded two kibbutzim in Western Galilee, each with its own party affiliation—Kabri (Mapam) and Gesher Haziv (Mapai). After the evacuation and destruction of Ramat Rahel many of its younger members, most of them supporters of Mapam, moved to kibbutz Ein Carmel, while the Mapai sympathizers returned to rebuild their old home. The war seems to have been a catalyst, deepening and perpetuating differences which might otherwise have been of less fateful import.

In the course of 1950, in the quite different circumstances of the growing tension between the parties, five young kibbutzim split up.²⁶ Almost all of these cases had a similar political complexion: the Mapam minority found it impossible to live in a community controlled by members of the rival party. In each case the central committee of the Kibbutz Me'uhad made strenuous efforts to persuade its political allies within the kibbutzim not to leave.²⁷

Despite the suspicions of the Mapai supporters, many of whom still believe that the split in their own kibbutz 'bore the same relationship to the split in the Kibbutz Me'uhad as a whole as did the Spanish Civil War to the Second World War',²⁸ it seems likely that the Mapam leaders were genuinely interested in preserving the unity of the movement, and of all its settlements: a division along party lines would destroy their claim to 'comprehensiveness' and threaten their position as the biggest and most

²⁵ Asaf, 'Political Conflict', pts. 7-9; Kafkafi, *Truth or Faith*, pt. 3.

²⁶ In Jan. 1950 the Mapai minority in a group which was to have reinforced Mash'abim in the northern Negev (later to be called Mash'abei Sadeh) left to join the nearby Kelta (now Hatzerim). Three months later the Mapam minority in Beit Ha'emek left the kibbutz *en bloc*, and joined the Mapam-dominated Eyal. These occurrences were followed, in the course of the year, by similar splits in Ma'agan, Bror Hayil, and Ha'on. Kelta was founded by graduates of the Scout movement, in which the two parties were at this time struggling for dominance. The other kibbutzim were all founded by graduates of the Kibbutz Me'uhad's youth movements recently arrived from Europe.

²⁷ Beit Ha'emek: minutes of Kibbutz Me'uhad Central Committee, 8 May 1950; Ma'agan: *ibid.*, 6 May 1950, 7 Sept. 1950; Ha'on: *ibid.*, 26-7 Nov. 1950. See also Asaf, 'Political Conflict', 383-6, 407-9.

²⁸ Interview by the author with Asher and Haviva Aranyi, Beit Ha'emek, Jan. 1987.

effective of the kibbutz movements. The events of 1950 sprang largely from the relative youth of the kibbutzim concerned, and of their members. They came to maturity during the period of intense politicization of the youth movements, and none of them was yet sufficiently consolidated for their common social and economic ties to provide a stimulus for continued unity.

None of this applied to the kibbutz which proved to be the *casus belli* for the final struggle within the Kibbutz Me'uhad, and led directly to its division in May 1951. Ashdot Ya'akov, in the Jordan valley, was one of the movement's three biggest kibbutzim. Over the years it had enjoyed an enviable record in successful absorption of new members, harmonious community life, and economic success. The harmony was disturbed with the secession of L'ahdut Ha'avoda from Mapai in 1944. In the 1946 elections Mapai had a small majority within the kibbutz, and this proportion was preserved until it broke up in 1951. Some of the leading figures in Ashdot Ya'akov were active in the political struggle at the movement level, on both sides, and by the beginning of 1948 the central institutions of the kibbutz were being chosen according to a party key. During the War of Independence the children and many of the women were evacuated, and the front line ran through the fields of the kibbutz. Under such conditions the life of the community was inevitably subject to heightened tension. As a result the internal divisions were intensified, and there was much criticism of those in responsible positions, often with clear political overtones. In the educational sphere, here as in other kibbutzim, the school and its authorities remained aloof from politics, while the 'young people's circle' was controlled by the Mapam element.

None of those concerned in the maintenance of this delicately balanced social structure, from the leaders of the movement to the ordinary members of the kibbutz, was interested in breaking up a community with a distinguished past and a great deal in common. The event which made further compromise impossible was the demand of the Mapam minority to accept as members of the kibbutz a new group which would have given it a small majority over the Mapai element. When this request was denied, the minority appealed to the central bodies of the movement. They found them divided according to party loyalties. The leaders of the Kibbutz Me'uhad, under constant attack from their colleagues in Mapam for their 'softness' in preferring the unity of the movement to the good of the party, dug their heels in. They met with equally stubborn resistance from the Mapai opposition in the movement. This group's refusal to accept the majority decision on the question of Ashdot

Ya'akov, taken at the level of a movement conference in May 1951, brought about its secession from the Kibbutz Me'uhad.

The political struggle within the Kibbutz Me'uhad can be analysed as a parallelogram of forces, in which the majority and the opposition were each composed of two elements: those whose primary consideration was the good of the kibbutz movement and its individual communities; and those whose motivation, at any rate within the context of this struggle, was primarily political. Each of these groups was influenced by its political allies outside the movement. From early in 1950 both the leaders of Mapai and those of Hever Hakvutzot urged their allies within the Kibbutz Me'uhad to bring matters to a head, even at the risk of a split; but even the most fanatical Mapai supporters were reluctant to endanger the unity of the movement and their kibbutzim. Several of the leaders of the Mapam majority, led by Ben-Aharon, urged open politicization of the Kibbutz Me'uhad. Most, however, with Tabenkin at their head, recognized the danger of a split if this were to happen, and resisted it as long as they could. That they refused to compromise on the Ashdot Ya'akov issue seems to have been very largely the result of their growing isolation within Mapam. The control of the party by the Hashomer Hatzair faction was constantly being strengthened by the leftward drift within the Kibbutz Me'uhad. In displaying an unwonted stubbornness, the central group of leaders was attempting to assert its control over both the Mapai and the Mapam sections of the movement. Thus, instead of leading to a further compromise, this incident triggered off an attempt to impose the rule of the majority—an attempt which led inevitably to the minority's refusal to comply, for agreement in this case would have been a precedent for imposing the majority's control on every kibbutz of the movement.²⁹

This analysis may be satisfactory as an explanation of the tactical moves which led to the split. But the struggle for power, however bitter, might never have led to the break-up of the movement had there not been some underlying issues which were perceived as being of supreme importance.

Ideology and Practical Politics

By the early 1950s many of the issues which had once divided the parties and factions within the labour movement were no longer relevant. Only one had taken on crucial importance: their attitude to Communism. At first sight it may seem that this was purely a matter of ideology, with no

²⁹ Asaf, 'Political Conflict', pts. 7-9.

practical implications for a kibbutz movement primarily concerned with the concrete problems of settlement, economic development, and immigrant absorption; indeed, this is an attitude widely held in the kibbutz movement today.

I've never been able to understand why the division took place. Even those who seemed to understand the dispute in the 1950s have by now lost their certainty about it . . . perhaps I knew something which I can't recall anymore . . . Somebody just raises a flag, and he's got followers. And waves of people also join the cause for social or personal motives of their own.³⁰

This comment was made towards the end of the 1970s by a woman who had been a high-school student at the time of the division of her kibbutz. It is the task of the historian to outline afresh the symbols on the flag which many of the protagonists can no longer recall.

There are some areas in which ideological questions are critical. For instance, as I noted in Chapter 2, the immediate cause of the split of the Hamahanot Ha'olim youth movement was a wide-ranging discussion on educational principles, one of whose components was whether it was more important to relate to the 'world of tomorrow' or to the Jewish people and the lessons of the Holocaust. Such matters are the stuff on which youth movements thrive and proliferate. But, as the course of events in the Kibbutz Me'uhad shows, these relatively abstract issues were not enough to threaten the integrity of a movement which was basically united on the main questions of settlement, immigration, and defence.

The practical consequences of Mapam's Soviet orientation in the pre-state period were comparatively few. But with the responsibilities of statehood, and the contemporaneous change in the nature of relations between the world power blocs, the political decisions which flowed from ideological attitudes became more concrete. Even then, issues such as coalition politics and the relationship with the Arab minority in Israel could well have been dealt with in the relatively confined framework of party political controversy. But there were some matters whose practical implications for the kibbutz community were potentially overwhelming. One of these was defence.

From the earliest days of the Cold War there had existed a very real possibility of war in the Middle East. The Truman doctrine had been formulated as a result of the struggle for control over Greece and Turkey. In the event of a global war there was no certainty that the fight-

³⁰ Liebllich, *Kibbutz Makom*, 165.

ing would not reach the Mediterranean, with far-reaching implications for Israel. Under these circumstances, Moshe Sneh's aspiration for Mapam to be an 'address' for the Soviet Union had a meaning that was clear to all, though rarely spelt out in public: in the case of war, Mapam and its kibbutz movements would support the Red Army rather than the forces of the West. In his speech to the Kibbutz Me'uhad's conference in October 1949 Tabenkin said:

We have only a few years—how many we cannot know—until the [next] world war. . . . Our hope that the Second World War would lead to . . . a permanent peace between the socialist world and the democratic countries . . . has been disappointed. The final victory threatens to destroy the culture of mankind in an atomic explosion; there is no longer any hope of the end of war.³¹

In December 1950 Mapam organized a course for young army officers. The lecturers included leaders of both sections of the party, from the Kibbutz Me'uhad and the Kibbutz Artzi, and the central ideological message was the need to prepare Israel for attachment to the Soviet bloc, in times of war or peace. Riftin, one of the most extreme leaders of the left wing of Mapam, described that party as 'a party of a superior type, in Lenin's words, organized as a fighting force, united and disciplined, which can withstand difficult adventures until the seizure of power in Palestine. . . . I think that a group of people with military skills is essential for this task.'³² The general feeling among the participants at the seminar was of sympathy for the left wing of the party, as against the rather more independent line pursued by the spokesmen of the Kibbutz Me'uhad. There is also some evidence of underground organization by Mapam members and sympathizers within the Mossad in early 1951.³³ It appears that, in the changed political context, Ben-Gurion's suspicions of disloyalty were better founded than they had been during his campaign against the Palmach.

These were, no doubt, extreme expressions of attitudes which were not necessarily held explicitly by all Mapam members; indeed, my own questioning of a number of rank-and-file Mapam supporters on their attitude to a possible armed conflict between Israel and the Soviet Union yielded such replies as 'Such a thing was unthinkable' and 'The question never arose'.³⁴ But the possibility that the political

³¹ Kibbutz Me'uhad, *Sixteenth Conference*, 46.

³² Quoted in Kafkafi, *Truth or Faith*, 140.

³³ *Ibid.* 138-43.

³⁴ From conversations with Mordechai Lung of kibbutz Farod, Sari Eldan of Be'eri, Michael Nathan of Beit Keshet, Ya'akov Oved of Palmahim, and others, Mar.-May 1988; and cf. Lieblich, *Kibbutz Makom*, 136, 146.

divisions within the Kibbutz Me'uhad could conceivably lead to literally fratricidal strife was an essential part of the background of the events of 1950 and 1951. Together with the increasing stridency of the ideological struggle between the great powers, it helps to explain the uncompromising positions taken up by both sides on questions of education. In kibbutz Gvat, one of the leaders of the younger generation was said to have declared that if it became clear that loyalty to Stalin was incompatible with Zionism, he would 'make a sacrifice for the greater good'.³⁵ When parents complained that the dynamic young youth leaders imbued with leftist ideology were 'stealing their children', the implications were far deeper than the danger that they would vote for Mapam at the next election.

The educational and cultural atmosphere engendered by the Cold War found expression in other, apparently more trivial, matters. For instance: whether and how to celebrate such occasions as the First of May, Stalin's birthday, and International Youth Day; whether Stalin's picture should be displayed on festive occasions, in the children's houses, in parades; whether biology should be taught according to the theories of Lysenko, and which books should be published by the Kibbutz Me'uhad publishing house. On many of these issues the old guard of the movement, while giving general assent to the party line, dissented from the fanaticism of the young; for instance, on the question of Titoism, and the place of national aspirations in Soviet policy and ideology, Tabenkin supported Tito, but had few allies except those in his immediate circle.³⁶ On the other hand, the policies of Leviteh, the *éminence grise* of the extreme pro-Soviet faction, were scarcely distinguishable from those of the left-wing majority in the Kibbutz Artzi. He was dropped from the central committee of the Kibbutz Me'uhad in April 1949 as a result of these views, but his following increased steadily under the pressure of world events; a number of the most active young leaders and intellectuals were loosely organized in a group known as 'Leviteh's young men', and spread his ideas widely throughout the movement. Perhaps an even greater blow to the morale of the leading faction was the accession of Yitzhak Sadeh, the revered ex-commander of the Palmach, to the left-wing majority.³⁷

³⁵ Quoted in Kafkafi, *Truth or Faith*, 135, who also describes the tension on educational subjects between the two factions in several other kibbutzim (ibid. 133-8).

³⁶ Ibid. 128, 133-8, 142, 195-200.

³⁷ Margalit, *United Left*, 97. For an unconventional account of Sadeh's character and biography, including his political views at this time, see Berlin, 'Yitzhak Sadeh', 20-4.

The historical issues which had divided the Kibbutz Me'uhad into two political factions, and the struggle for power which emerged from that division, were essential factors in the split of 1951. But they were not in themselves sufficient conditions. The split came about not as the cumulative result of the struggles within the movement, but because of the growing belligerency of both the worldwide blocs, and the importunity of the demands they made on their allies. Israel's foreign policy had aimed at neutrality between the great power blocs. With the outbreak of the Korean War, the Mapai leaders became convinced that the political and economic support which the state needed for survival depended on its ranging itself alongside America's minor allies.³⁸ In the opposing camp, Stalinist Communism demanded complete loyalty; and the Mapam leaders' anxiety to commend Zionism and the Jewish state to their potential allies made them all the more ready to demonstrate their orthodoxy in other respects.

For the kibbutz movement these were not matters that could be left to politicians. They required practical decisions in its schools and youth movements, and in its cultural and educational committees; and there was a real and palpable danger that in the near future they would have military implications. It is no doubt a rhetorical exaggeration to say that the question at issue in the struggle for control of the Kibbutz Me'uhad was who would hold the keys of the kibbutz armoury when war broke out. But it is not very far from the truth.

The unity of the Kibbutz Me'uhad was one of the many casualties of the Cold War. Of the many parallel events in the world, the Israeli polity, and the kibbutz movements during this period, a few may be mentioned. Thorez's declaration of support for the Red Army in February 1949 was followed by Hazan's reference to the Soviet Union as the workers' 'second motherland' a month later. McCarthy's first major anti-Communist speech was delivered in February 1950. In the same month Mapai's coalition offer to Mapam was rejected after a co-ordinated vote within the party of the Kibbutz Artzi and its allies, and the escalation of the crisis in Ashdot Ya'akov began. The Korean War broke out in July 1950, and between then and the end of the year five kibbutzim divided along political lines. The final division, at the Kibbutz Me'uhad's Na'an conference in May 1951, took place shortly after the climax of anti-Communism in the United States, with the death sentence on the Rosenbergs for supplying information about atomic weapons to the Soviet Union.

³⁸ Safran, *The United States and Israel*, 218-21.

The message from East and West reached Israeli politicians and ordinary citizens alike through a thousand channels, from the American and Soviet embassies to the press and radio: the world was deeply divided, and Korea was the pattern of things to come. The Korean War reached its peak politically with MacArthur's proposal to attack China in March 1951, and militarily with the spring offensive in May; these moves coincided exactly with the final moves in the division of the Kibbutz Me'uhad.

THE DIVISION

The Mapai minority's decision to leave the Kibbutz Me'uhad was the start of a long and agonizing process in the course of which each kibbutz defined its movement loyalty. Minority groups moved to kibbutzim of their own political complexion, until virtually every kibbutz was politically homogeneous. In many cases the transfer did irreparable damage to the social fabric of a previously flourishing kibbutz, sometimes including the outcome against which the Mapai leaders had warned—the separation of young people from their parents. In others, the accession of new members strengthened existing kibbutzim, though often at the cost of much agony of spirit and social friction. Here are the words of a woman who left Beit Hashita for Ayelet Hashahar:

To the present day, in my dreams, I'm always in Beit Hashita. I have one recurring dream in which I see all the members, all the rooms, contained within one big hall, and this hall is Beit Hashita. I think this is highly significant, because in Beit Hashita the kibbutz as a whole was more important than the separate families or our private rooms; the whole always came first. Here, it's the other way round. My home, my family take utmost priority, and the kibbutz is the assemblage of all these individual cells.

I keep dreaming that I'm in Beit Hashita [*becoming tearful*] and I have many slips of the tongue reflecting that unconsciously I'm still a part of it. Often I wrote 'Beit Hashita' as my return address on the back of my letters. Would you believe that? As if my soul had remained over there. It's strange, since I've been here for twenty-seven years, and I was in Beit Hashita for only fourteen. . . .

The division affected me very harshly, in spite of the fact that, politically, I was completely convinced that we had to leave. . . . [None the less] I'm a great admirer of Beit Hashita, probably giving it more credit than it's due. Whenever I see something sick or basically wrong here, I say to myself 'This couldn't have happened in Beit Hashita'. . . . Beit Hashita has remained for me a point of light in a dark reality. This is probably because, as I do *not* live there, it can remain an ideal for me.³⁹

³⁹ Lieblich, *Kibbutz Makom*, 135.

This woman's husband was also interviewed:

On the surface, I have adjusted to living here. But . . . the pain of my departure from Beit Hashita has remained alive, though buried deep inside me. At the beginning I used to talk readily about Beit Hashita, using it as an example both in personal encounters and in the general assembly meetings. I wasn't completely aware of what I was doing, until I realized how hurt the people here were by this; then I stopped.⁴⁰

Amia Lieblich, who recorded these words, added: 'This big man broke out in tears several times during our conversation.'

The technical details of the separation were negotiated through a special committee of the Histadrut, but in a number of cases it was accompanied by a bitter struggle over the allocation of land and other resources, and in a few instances even by violence. Some of the most uncompromising conflicts took place in veteran kibbutzim such as Ashdot Ya'akov, where the rival groups were nearly equal, and each side wanted to retain the original site of the kibbutz, with all its historical and emotional significance. The most extreme case was Ein Harod, which had a Mapai majority, but was the site of the headquarters of the Kibbutz Me'uhad—as well as being the home of Yitzhak Tabenkin and the cradle of the movement. Here, after a violent struggle in the course of which different parts of the kibbutz, including the dining-hall, were divided by barbed wire, settlement was reached only in May 1955, when the majority moved to a new site close by.⁴¹ This was the final move in the division.

In October 1951 Hever Hakvutzot and the Mapai kibbutzim which had left the Kibbutz Me'uhad together formed the Ihud. When the transfer was complete, forty-eight of the Kibbutz Me'uhad's seventy-eight kibbutzim remained in the movement, and twenty-three joined the Ihud. Six veteran kibbutzim, where the minority numbered 40 per cent or more, were divided, and a new kibbutz built in the vicinity by those who left. One kibbutz, Ne'ot Mordechai in Upper Galilee, was so evenly divided that it decided to join no movement, though it became, *de facto*, part of the Ihud in the course of the coming decade. Of the minority groups and individuals who transferred to other kibbutzim, 274 adult members and 223 children left kibbutzim of the Ihud to join the Kibbutz Me'uhad, while 522 adult members and 571 children joined the Ihud.⁴²

⁴⁰ Lieblich, *Kibbutz Makom*, 139, 142.

⁴¹ Kafkafi, 'The Splitting of Ein Harod'.

⁴² Kibbutz Me'uhad, report of Economic Department, 1 Oct. 1954 (mimeo).

Sources of Schism

Who joined each of the camps, and why? In ideological terms, the dividing-lines are clear. Israel's labour movement was split in much the same way as the rest of the socialist movement throughout the Western world, and each kibbutz member was free to use his or her judgement on political issues such as the nature of Communism and the future of the Cold War. But the alignment of forces shows that this was not the whole story. For the overwhelming theme in the division was loyalty: not to the Kibbutz Me'uhad as such, but to the political allies of the majority in each kibbutz. Forty-one kibbutzim declared unequivocally for Mapam, and thirteen for Mapai.⁴³ Thus, although in several of these cases a few individuals or a small group left, over 70 per cent of the Kibbutz Me'uhad's seventy-eight kibbutzim were virtually monolithic. Nearly all of them were created and led by graduates of a single youth movement, or a combination of two such groups.

In the politically divided kibbutzim the situation was more complex, but in most cases the struggle was, as in the central bodies of the Kibbutz Me'uhad, between groups with distinct movement identities of long standing. Table 8.1 correlates the behaviour of kibbutzim in the division with the origins of their founding and formative groups—those which had a tangible influence on their communities' cultural ambience. In general, people stayed with those with whom they had grown up in the youth movement. This network of personal loyalties at the local and national level combined with the accepted wisdom of their movement to confirm ideological leanings acquired at an early age. The Noar Oved and its members supported Mapam, the English-speaking movements (Habonim), and most of Netzah supported Mapai; Youth Aliya was not an independent movement, and its graduates split according to the political complexion of the kibbutzim in which they had been educated. The senior leadership of the Scout movement and its settlement groups had until recently been controlled by the Kibbutz Me'uhad majority; the division in its kibbutzim reflects the revolt of the Mapai minority. Much the same applies to Hamahanot Ha'olim, which had itself split on party lines. In short, with a number of minor exceptions the split in the Kibbutz Me'uhad almost exactly reflected the political complexion of the youth movements from which its members had been recruited.

⁴³ These do not include kibbutzim which split on the same issue at an earlier date, such as Beit Ha'emek or Ramat Rahel, though they are included in the analysis of movement origins below.

TABLE 8.1 Founding and formative groups in the Kibbutz Me'uhad kibbutzim, 1951

Movement	Mapam kibbutzim	Mapai kibbutzim	Divided kibbutzim
Noar Oved	16	—	1
Youth Aliya	7	3	2
Scouts	5	—	2
Hamahanot Ha'olim	4	—	2
Hechalutz, Poland	4	1	5
Habonim, Hungary	—	—	2
Dror, Hungary	2	—	—
Habonim and Hechalutz, Germany	2	2	7
Netzah	—	5	4
Habonim, English-speaking countries	—	3	—
Dror, Argentina	—	1	—

Sources: Tsur, *Settlement*, iii, 41-2, 68-9; Shoshani, *Kvutza and Kibbutz*, supplemented by my personal knowledge and conversations with members of several of the kibbutzim concerned.

Note: The analysis is my own. There are more groups than kibbutzim because a number of kibbutzim absorbed groups from several different countries.

All this applies in large measure to the kibbutzim founded since the mid-1930s. The situation in the older, and very much bigger, kibbutzim was more complex. In the table it is reflected in the varied allegiances of the graduates of Polish Hechalutz, who made up a large part of these communities. In many cases, for example in Ramat Rahel and Giv'at Hashlosha, the political split was an expression of intergenerational tensions, often intensified by the local leadership's resentment of the overbearing attitudes of the movement establishment. In Ein Harod it reflected long-standing local opposition to Tabenkin and his supporters.⁴⁴ Most of the members of these kibbutzim had completed their movement education before the tension between the leadership of Mapai and that of the Kibbutz Me'uhad developed into open enmity. In such cases movement loyalties were no clear guide, and there was a relatively greater number of purely ideological choices.

There was a similar variety among the graduates of the German youth movements. Some of them developed their antipathy to the dictatorial methods of the central leadership as a result of an extended controversy

⁴⁴ Rosolio, 'The Controversy', 25-8.

about absorption policy.⁴⁵ Others divided in response to the overt ideological issues. Here, as in Hechalutz, the educational movement had ceased to exist by the time these issues reached their full force.

On the whole, young people born in the kibbutzim favoured Mapam. But this was not always so. In Tel Yosef a high proportion of the younger generation took a plainly ideological decision and left home and parents. In Giv'at Haim, 'we took part in all the discussions; the children's houses were seething with political activity. But it turned out—coincidentally, as it then seemed—that each of us, by his own free decision, took the line of his parents.'⁴⁶

In some of the younger kibbutzim, too, social and personal configurations underlay the ideological differences. In Beit Ha'emek, for instance, the political alignment very largely matched the social groupings created when the founders had lived in separate 'kibbutzim' in Cyprus, and in their training period at veteran kibbutzim. In the division of Beit Ha'arava and Beit Hashita the leaders of the Mapai faction had been profoundly influenced by their personal contact with Berl Katznelson. But these were special cases among the younger kibbutzim, most of which remained faithful to their youth movement roots.

On the whole, the political attitudes of the different youth movements underline the importance of national origins in the formation of political culture. Immigrants from democratic societies such as the English-speaking countries and, in the main, those where Netzah flourished, tended to reject Mapam's pro-Communist policies, while those who originated in the less democratic countries were more inclined to accept them. German political culture, whether expressed in the strength (and eventual fate) of its democratic institutions or in the strength of its Communist Party, lay somewhere between these two extremes, and so did the behaviour of those whose political socialization had taken place in Germany. In this respect, the Israeli youth movements must be seen as products not of an independent political culture, but of the deeply divided Labour Zionist movement.

When the transfer had been completed the Kibbutz Me'uhad no longer held the dominant position among the kibbutz movements which it had enjoyed since the early 1930s. The kibbutzim were now divided into three major movements of roughly the same size, as well as the Kibbutz Dati and the Ha'oved Hatzioni, which was from now on part of

⁴⁵ See *KM* i. 348-9.

⁴⁶ Amram Hayisra'eli of Giv'at Haim, 18 years old in 1951, in a conversation with the author, 1978.

the Ihud organizationally, though it still retained its political connections with the Progressive Party. Each of these groupings had its attendant youth movements and a more or less homogeneous political identity. This arrangement was to last, with a number of adjustments in the political sphere, until the Kibbutz Me'uhad reunited with the Ihud to form the United Kibbutz Movement in 1980.

THE PRAGUE TRIAL

Even after the departure of the Mapai faction there were deep divisions within the Kibbutz Me'uhad. The leftward progression of both factions within Mapam had left them open to extremist influence. In many of the kibbutzim of both the Kibbutz Artzi and the Kibbutz Me'uhad there were individuals, and a number of groups, close to the outlook of Moshe Sneh, who was edging towards unqualified approval of Communist policy in all its aspects. Within the Kibbutz Me'uhad firm disciplinary measures were taken, and a number of such dissident elements eased out of the movement. Within the Kibbutz Artzi the veteran leadership was now in a minority. Ya'ari, Hazan, and their followers prepared for a showdown with those in their movement whose Zionist loyalties were in doubt; but it was not at all certain that they were capable of halting the trend to the left. There was a distinct danger of large-scale defections to the Communist Party if this process were to continue. It was halted by an event not of their own making.⁴⁷

In February 1952 Mordechai Oren, a veteran Mapam politician and member of kibbutz Mizra, was arrested in Czechoslovakia. In the show trial of Rudolph Slansky and other Czech leaders for treachery to the regime, he was accused of spying for the British, and sentenced to fifteen years' imprisonment. His friends in the Kibbutz Artzi were aghast: they were certain that he was innocent. Oren was a prominent figure in the left wing of Mapam, and had been criticized for playing down the movement's Zionist principles at international gatherings in order to find favour with the Communist parties.⁴⁸ The accusations against him were clearly aimed at discrediting Zionism. But both the factions of Mapam had great difficulty in accepting the fact that the trial was a travesty of justice, and even more in admitting this in public.

Within the faction led by the Kibbutz Artzi, Moshe Sneh and his

⁴⁷ For fuller discussions of the Prague trial see Tsur, 'The Prague Incident'; Kafkafi, *Truth or Faith*, ch. 9; Margalit, *United Left*, 122-32, 221.

⁴⁸ Aharonson, 'Unity', 8.

followers insisted on complete approval of the Communist Party line. For almost a year the leaders of the Kibbutz Artzi and the Kibbutz Me'uhad alike walked a very tricky ideological tightrope in rejecting this line and defending Oren, while not condemning the trial and the Soviet regime. The 'doctors' plot' of 1952-3, with its antisemitic overtones, persuaded them to express their reservations in public.⁴⁹ In the end, therefore, these two show trials proved to be a catalyst which enabled Mapam's leadership to rid itself of the anti-Zionist elements in the movement with relative ease. In January 1953 Sneh's group was expelled; shortly afterwards it joined the Israeli Communist Party.

For a year and more after the Oren trial, both of Mapam's kibbutz movements were occupied with eliminating the remnants of Sneh's doctrines and supporters. The leaders of the Kibbutz Me'uhad took decisive action to neutralize the central figures in its leftist group. A number of dissident groups and individuals, mainly in the younger kibbutzim, were expelled or persuaded to leave. In the Kibbutz Artzi the leftists were both greater in number and closer to the centre of power. Here, the leadership tradition of the youth movement helped to moderate the process, which was a matter of ideological and personal persuasion rather than administrative decision. By the Kibbutz Artzi's conference in 1954 the leaders of the leftist faction had recanted, and they were given a 'second chance' in the central bodies of the movements. Some hundreds of members left or were expelled from each of these movements in the aftermath of Prague.⁵⁰ Each movement lost a kibbutz: Har'el of the Kibbutz Artzi broke up after its leading members had left with the Sneh faction, and was repopulated with young members politically loyal to the movement; Yad Hanna left the Kibbutz Me'uhad and affiliated to the Communist Party of Israel.

Mapam after Prague

The combined effect of the Prague trial and the division of the Kibbutz Me'uhad was to widen the rift between the two factions of Mapam. Each of the kibbutz movements embarked on a process of ideological redefinition. At its conference of July 1953 the Kibbutz Me'uhad decided on a policy of 'ideological solidarity' meant to ensure the domination of

⁴⁹ 'Doctors' plot' refers to accusations made by Stalin in the last year of his life (1953) that a group of Jewish doctors was plotting to kill him. It was generally believed that the accusations would presage a wave of officially condoned antisemitism, but this was forestalled by Stalin's death.

⁵⁰ Kafkafi, *Truth or Faith*, 169-73; Merhav, *Short History*, 170.

Tabenkin and his supporters, and to prevent any attempt to organize groups of left- or right-wing dissidents. This meant a return to the traditional emphases of the Kibbutz Me'uhad: activism in defence issues and constructivism in social and political questions, in a framework of opposition to Mapai. In 1954 the Kibbutz Artzi adopted a thesis of Meir Ya'ari based on a synthesis between Zionism and Stalin's theory of nationality, while its political platform emphasized the aspiration to peace between peoples on both the local and the international level. In terms of practical politics, the conflict between these two fundamental theses emphasized the gap between the two factions on issues which had divided them since the establishment of the party: the status of the Arabs within Mapam, and the question of political collaboration with Mapai. In September 1954 Mapam split into two separate parties: the Hashomer Hatzair faction retained the name of the party, while the faction controlled by the Kibbutz Me'uhad now became the Ahdut Ha'avoda party.

For the remainder of the 1950s each of these parties attempted to maintain an independent socialist policy, and extract whatever concessions it could from successive Mapai-controlled governments. Both took part in coalitions led by Mapai from 1955 onwards. Ideologically, the differences between Ahdut Ha'avoda and Mapai narrowed, until the partnership between the two parties was formalized in an electoral alliance in 1965 and by the establishment of the Israeli Labour Party (*Mifleget Ha'avoda*) in 1968.

The gap between the independent Mapam and Mapai also narrowed over the coming years. In the mid-1950s it became clear that the Soviet Union was supporting the Arab states against Israel both diplomatically and militarily. Thus, although Mapam continued to press for Israel to increase its efforts to make peace with her neighbours, it no longer had a radically independent foreign policy. And, together with other fellow-travelling parties, its ideology was fundamentally affected by the Twentieth Congress of the Russian Communist Party in 1958. From then on, the socialism of both the Kibbutz Me'uhad and the Kibbutz Artzi was centred on the aspiration to reduce social inequality in Israeli society and to promote the growth of the kibbutz movement, rather than on any universalist social theory.

The sum total of this chapter in kibbutz politics is negative in the extreme. The leaders of the two major kibbutz movements adopted policies which all today agree to have been fundamentally mistaken. In doing so, they brought about a fatal schism in one movement, ruined many

lives, and set back the development of literally dozens of kibbutz communities. The issues on which they were divided were, at least potentially, of first importance to the future of Israel and the kibbutz. But there were others, no less pressing, which received much less attention. The kibbutz movements' preoccupation with politics distracted them from directing persistent and creative thought to the other major issues of the day, particularly immigrant absorption, and their social relationships with what came to be known as 'the other Israel'.⁵¹ It would certainly have been unrealistic to expect great numbers to join the kibbutzim at this time. But if only a modicum of the effort, thought, and talent directed to the political struggle had been devoted to work with immigrant groups, innovative social forms and alliances, or even united political pressure to ensure a greater share of governmental support, it seems likely that the rate of growth would have been greater: perhaps those who remained in the kibbutzim might even have reached a critical mass which would have ensured an overall relative growth of the kibbutz movement over the coming decade, rather than the slow decline which actually took place.

There can be no doubt, therefore, that the political division of the kibbutz movement was a major source of weakness as it grappled with the trauma of the post-state crisis. But the schisms which it brought about were not entirely harmful. Despite their cost in human suffering and economic resources, they enabled each of the movements concerned to pursue its own course of development politically, socially, and economically, without the inter-movement wrangling which marked the period from 1948 to 1954.⁵²

In reviewing the reasons for this chain of events, one must begin by emphasizing that the Israeli left was not alone. The issue of relationships with the Soviet Union divided the whole of the Western socialist movement, and the kibbutz movements were divided in roughly the same proportions as the countries from which their members originated. What does seem to be rather special is the particular form of *Realpolitik*

⁵¹ One indication of this is the interpretation of the concept of *halutzius* (pioneering) in increasingly political terms in the early 1950s by the Kibbutz Me'uhad and the Kibbutz Artzi. Near, 'Pioneers and Pioneering'.

⁵² For instance Tel Yosef and Dorot initiated more 'liberal' systems of distribution of goods shortly before the division of the Kibbutz Me'uhad. These changes were not only condemned by the movement leadership; they were also advanced as reasons for expelling these kibbutzim from the movement—a suggestion which was automatically opposed by the Mapai faction. Within the Ihud, these questions were discussed, if not dispassionately, without the added complication of party rivalry. See Ch. 10 below.

advocated by Sneh, with the support of many leading figures in Mapam. It was not, of course, peculiar to the kibbutz movements. Their contribution to the disaster was a certain naïvety, and a willingness on the part of their veteran leaders to compromise with the more extreme tendencies among their younger members.

This episode becomes comprehensible when viewed against the background of the historical circumstances. But it is hard to see it as anything other than a tragic aberration in the development of the kibbutz movement. Although much of the damage it caused has been mitigated with the years, many of its effects can still be perceived today, more than forty years later.

Towards Prosperity: Settlement, Economics, and Politics, 1954-1977

THE Israeli nation did not have the good fortune to be without history for the two decades described in this chapter. It suffered a long series of armed incursions and terrorist attacks, and three major wars—the Sinai campaign (October 1956), the Six-Day War (June 1967), and the Yom Kippur War (October 1973)—and in the years after 1967 its occupation of neighbouring territory had a profound effect both on Israeli society and on the relationship between the state and the surrounding world. Politically this period saw the eclipse of the founding fathers of the state and a struggle for leadership among the younger generation. Cultural and social tensions—both between Jews and Arabs and within the Jewish community—led to ethnic rivalry, economic differentiation, and political polarization. Against this background, the disillusion with the political and military establishment which sprang from the failure to foresee the Yom Kippur War resulted in a groundswell of protest which culminated in the election of the first Likud government in 1977.

In the economic sphere, a decade of prosperity was followed in 1965-6 by a deep recession and then, in the wake of the Six-Day War, by a speedy recovery based on the integration of cheap Arab labour into the system and a substantial increase in American aid. The 1973 war, with the consequent rise in oil prices, was followed by an economic slowdown combined with severe inflationary pressure. The Labour government's attempts to curb inflation and reduce the balance of payments deficit by a moderately restrictionist policy were brought to an end with the change of government in 1977.¹

Within this context the kibbutz movement was relatively unaffected by outstanding historical events. In sharp contrast to the 1950s, when crisis followed crisis and the fortunes of the kibbutz were intimately bound up with the hopes and hazards of Israeli society and of the world at large, in the next two decades the kibbutz community developed to a great degree at its own pace. Like other sectors of society, it was profoundly affected by the wars and the social and economic vicissitudes of the time. But, while

¹ Barkai, *Economic Patterns*.

its relationships with Israeli society were of crucial importance, they were no longer as hectic and crisis-ridden as in former times. A great many of the changes in the community, some of which involved fundamental modifications of ways of life and thought, resulted from its own internal development rather than its interaction with the outside world.

This chapter is devoted to what may be described as the public life of the kibbutz movement: issues of security, settlement, economics and politics, and the relationship between the kibbutz and the surrounding society. Chapter 10 looks at the social and cultural development of the kibbutz community during these two decades.

SECURITY

The signing of the ceasefire agreements in 1949 did not mean peace for Israel. From a very early stage there began a series of incursions from across the Egyptian and Jordanian borders: at first, by refugees attempting to return to their homes, or to alleviate their economic distress by theft; later, also by armed terrorists and saboteurs. The infiltrators took a heavy toll of life, and an even greater one of property. The kibbutzim and moshavim located on the borders suffered particularly badly: theft and sabotage became almost nightly occurrences in the settlements of the Negev and the Jerusalem corridor. The Israeli government's reply was a series of reprisal raids, some against civilian targets, others against army units which were thought to have organized or aided the infiltrators.

In the long run, these raids were of little use in deterring armed incursions. But they yielded some important indirect results. The morale and operational effectiveness of the Israeli army had plummeted because of its lack of experienced officers and its high proportion of new immigrants with little battle skill or knowledge. The consequent ineffectiveness of the reprisal raids, and several operational failures in clashes with the Arab Legion, led to some serious rethinking of training and tactics. In the summer of 1953 a special commando unit known as the 101, commanded by Ariel Sharon, was formed.² Hand-picked by Sharon, it was made up largely of kibbutz and moshav members, a high proportion of them former Palmach fighters recalled to reserve service for special operations. Although it only existed for six months, and marred its record by killing some seventy civilians in a reprisal raid on the Jordanian village of Kibya, this unit, together with the élite paratroop brigade

² Luttwak and Horowitz, *Israeli Army*, 104-18; Schiff, *A History*, ch. 5.

established shortly afterwards by Sharon, created new standards of operation and training which, in the words of one commentator, 'ultimately infected the entire army with a yen for battle and a taste for victory. All aspired to the standards set by the paratroops.'³ These crack units, to which were later added a number of specialist commando units, contained a high proportion of kibbutz- and moshav-born soldiers.

Parallel to this development there took place a 'silent revolution' no less—perhaps even more—important. Two ex-Palmach officers, Yitzhak Rabin and Meir Pa'il, backed by Moshe Dayan (commander-in-chief of the IDF from 1953) introduced fundamental changes in training methods, particularly at the level of NCOs and junior officers. The new techniques, largely based on the experience and ways of thinking of the Palmach, though improved in the light of the War of Independence, emphasized the need for practical fieldwork, and for the development of leadership qualities in officers and of individual initiative in both officers and men. From this period, too, the ex-Palmach officers who had remained in the IDF began their ascent towards high command.⁴

The Sinai campaign of 1956 can be seen as the culmination of the reprisal raids. It was followed by several years of comparative quiet marred by sporadic incidents which eventually led to the Six-Day War. These comprised escalating acts of sabotage by the Fatah organization established in 1965 by Yasser Arafat, and the dispute between Israel, Syria, and Jordan over the use of the waters of the Jordan for irrigation, which the Syrians opposed with increasing violence. This reached its height in 1966-7, when Syrian artillery frequently bombarded the kibbutzim of Upper Galilee and the Jordan valley from positions of vantage on the Golan Heights. It was the experience of such bombardments, during which the settlers and their children were forced to spend long periods in the shelters, that led the kibbutzim in these areas to demand after the Six-Day War that the Golan should be settled by Israelis to prevent the return of the Syrians.⁵

In May 1967, believing that Israel was about to launch a massive attack on Syria, the Egyptians moved large forces into the Sinai peninsula, successfully demanded the removal of UN observers from the region, and blockaded Israel's naval outlet to the south, the Straits of Tiran. Jordan and Iraq announced their support for military measures against Israel.

³ Ibid. 81.

⁴ Luttwak and Horowitz, *Israeli Army*, 118; interview by the author with Meir Pa'il, 15 Nov. 1995.

⁵ Lorch, *One Long War*, 130.

After three weeks' hesitation and diplomatic activity Israel attacked, to achieve a victory far beyond anything the world or, indeed, most Israelis, had believed possible: the Sinai peninsula, Jordanian territory as far as the river Jordan, and the Golan Heights were occupied in swift and brilliant operations. A new era had begun.

After the Six-Day War the kibbutzim played their traditional role in defence, by taking part in a wave of settlement at points of strategic and political importance. But this contribution was equalled, if not surpassed, by the part played by kibbutz members in the fighting itself.

The general reaction of the Israeli public to the IDF's overwhelming victory of June 1967 was of euphoria, pride, and a high degree of complacency about the political future of the Middle East. A dissident note was sounded by the appearance of a book entitled *Soldiers' Talk*, originally published privately by the youth department of the Ihud, but subsequently distributed widely in Hebrew, and translated into several foreign languages.⁶ This was a wide-ranging series of discussions between young kibbutz-born men and women who had fought in the Six-Day War. It dealt with the experiences and traumas of war, the place of humane values in battle, intergenerational relationships, and the political issues raised by the Israeli occupation of Arab lands, on which most of the participants took a dovish position. Widely discussed and publicized, its impact was magnified with the release of the casualty lists, when it was realized that the kibbutz movement, and particularly its younger generation, had paid a proportionately much higher price for victory than the rest of the country. The figures were widely interpreted to mean that this group of people was playing an exceptional role in the IDF, and indeed this was quite true. Continuing the tradition established by Unit 101 and the paratroops, they served in numbers far greater than their proportion in the population in three particularly dangerous roles: as pilots, as junior officers, and in the crack volunteer units of the IDF. It appeared that they had inherited their parents' dedication to the defence of the country, and were functioning as a serving élite in Israeli society, as had the kibbutz movement during the heroic period of its history.

The Six-Day War was followed by an uneasy peace, known in Israel as 'the war of attrition'. From September 1968 the IDF strongholds along the Suez Canal constituted the main focus of violence, which prompted Israeli air strikes deep into Egypt and, in their wake, Soviet intervention. From August 1970 this front was quiet. On and beyond its other borders, however, Israel was constantly subjected to sabotage, often supported

⁶ Published in English as Near, *The Seventh Day*.

tacitly or openly by the armed forces of the neighbouring states. In 1968, and again during most of 1970, the kibbutzim and moshavim of the Beit She'an valley suffered sabotage attacks and shelling both from PLO forces and from the Arab Legion, until a ceasefire was declared in August 1970, and forcefully maintained after the massacre of Palestinians by the Jordanian army in September of that year ('Black September', in the PLO terminology). In 1969-70 PLO forces attacked settlements on the Golan Heights and in Upper Galilee, often with the backing of the Syrian army. These attacks became more frequent after September 1970, when the PLO transferred the centre of its activities to Lebanon, and particularly to the area on the western slopes of Mount Hermon known as Fatahland. As before 1967, whole communities again spent many days and nights in shelters, and suffered losses in life, property, and productivity.⁷

Meanwhile, new kibbutzim and moshavim were being founded according to the doctrine of strategic settlement, particularly on the Golan Heights and in northern Sinai, though in numbers limited by the availability of manpower. The events of the Yom Kippur War of 1973 dealt a severe blow to the theory that civilian settlement was a guarantee of military security: the war caught the whole of the military establishment unprepared, and the Syrian army overran much of the Golan Heights and threatened the settlements of Upper Galilee; the kibbutzim on the Golan Heights had no defence against an attack in such strength, and their inhabitants were evacuated overnight as the Syrian army drew near. In another sense, too, the kibbutzim again paid a high price for the security of the country: as in the Six-Day War, their casualties were disproportionately high.⁸

After the war there was a short pause in hostilities, but the PLO forces were now ensconced in strength in southern Lebanon. Two incursions by IDF forces, in 1970 and 1972, had failed to prevent terrorist incursions and rocket attacks, and by 1977 these had become a recurrent feature of life in the kibbutzim, moshavim, and towns of Northern Galilee.

The war experience of the kibbutz movement in this period can be summed up in a few sentences. The settlement of disputed territory was

⁷ Lorch, *One Long War*, ch. 7.

⁸ Of those killed in the Six-Day War, 12.8% were kibbutz-born and/or kibbutz members, although the kibbutzim represented only 3.5% of the Jewish population; in the Yom Kippur War the parallel percentages were 12.6% and 3.4%. *Dead and Missing: Statistical Abstract* (1968, 1974), table 2, and details supplied by IDF's Department for the Commemoration of the Fallen.

no guarantee either of its future political status or of the physical security of the kibbutzim. Even after the territorial changes of 1967 many of the old borders of Israel were still in danger, and the kibbutzim often bore the brunt of the attacks. Any frontier could become dangerous overnight, and between 1967 and 1973 there were few periods when no group of kibbutzim was under attack. But, as I have already made clear, the main contribution of the kibbutzim to the defence of the country lay in the actions of their talented and dedicated youth. Although only a small number of kibbutz-born soldiers became professionals, some of those who did were outstanding officers, who advanced quickly to the highest rank;⁹ many others, with the encouragement of their kibbutzim, added several years to their compulsory three years' service. All this is in addition to the role they played as volunteers in the IDF. This phenomenon became the object of a fair amount of research, and several hypotheses were advanced to explain it: the great variety of stimuli experienced by kibbutz children in early childhood, giving them exceptionally fast reactions; their exceptionally strong sense of responsibility, developed by the system of communal education; social pressure from their peer group, and the desire to serve along with others of a similar social background; and the ambition to succeed in a framework well adapted to exploit their social skills.¹⁰ No doubt there was some truth in all of these theories. But the facts were quite clear, and well known throughout Israeli society: kibbutz members, and particularly kibbutz-born men, played a vital part in the leadership of the Israeli defence forces.

SETTLEMENT

The Beginning of Recovery, 1954-1966

Lack of manpower was still a critical problem throughout this period. Not only had the Holocaust destroyed the kibbutz movement's natural reserves in the Diaspora: for many immigrants in the early years of the state the kibbutz was simply a convenient first stop in the process of absorption into the country, and a high proportion left as soon as they were able to find a viable alternative. The bulk of the Jewish people outside the Soviet Union was now concentrated in the English-speaking

⁹ Among them: Mordechai Hod, commander of the air force, and Dan Shomron and Ehud Barak, later to be commanders-in-chief of the IDF.

¹⁰ Amir, 'Effectiveness of the Kibbutz-born'; Agin, 'The Kibbutz-born Soldier'.

countries and South America. The pioneering youth movements in these communities were small, and the number of kibbutz members they contributed tiny compared with those sent by the pre-war youth movements of Europe. The kibbutz movements continued to invest educational efforts and manpower in these movements, but increasingly justified these efforts not in terms of their returns for the kibbutzim, but of their contribution to Jewish culture in the Diaspora, and the encouragement of immigration to Israel—not necessarily to the kibbutz. Israeli youth movements, a high proportion of whose graduates carried out their army service in the Nahal, now constituted the chief source of possible recruitment. But, although the investment in more than a dozen movements, ranging from the Scouts to Hashomer Hatzair, was even greater than that in the Diaspora, their numbers were limited, and the proportions who joined the Nahal and, subsequently, the kibbutzim, even more so.¹¹ In sum, therefore, those who joined the kibbutzim were far too few to meet all their needs and aspirations.

All the movements adjusted to the new conditions by reducing the extent of new settlement, and devoting the bulk of their recruits to strengthening existing settlements: only eleven new kibbutzim were established in the years 1955-66, although almost 700 groups passed through the Nahal during that period.¹² Many of these served in *he'ahzuyot*, in which military duties were combined with agricultural and other work, preparing the infrastructure for border settlement. Others spent more than a year of their service in existing kibbutzim, thus providing much-needed manpower, even though a high proportion left the kibbutz on or soon after their release from the army.

The rationale for the support given by the government to the Nahal is to be found in Israel's gradually worsening political and military situation in the mid-1950s. Its land borders are almost 1,000 kilometres long. Despite the great effort made during the war and immediately after it to ensure that they would be protected by a continuous string of permanent settlements, there were still many places where they were easily crossed. The ceasefire agreements of 1948/9 had not led to a single permanent peace treaty. From 1952 onwards there was a constant increase in

¹¹ Of those who passed through the Nahal between 1951 and 1971, only 26.4% remained as kibbutz members. Moreover, since the proportion was significantly higher in the more selective youth movements (Hashomer Hatzair and the Hamahanot Ha'olim), the absolute numbers were very small in relation to the population among whom they worked. Atid *et al.*, *Absorption of Nahal Groups*, 189.

¹² See Appendix 1; Douer, *Nahal Groups*, 63-117, 207. This does not include the intake which was mobilized at the time of the Six-Day War.

incursions by the Fedayeen commando units from Syria, Jordan, and the Gaza Strip. Israel's military response was an escalating series of reprisal raids, culminating in the Sinai campaign of October 1956. These developments also led to a renewal of the concept of strategic settlements: kibbutzim and moshavim were situated at strategic points close to the most vulnerable borders. As in the tower and stockade period, kibbutzim—and the *he'ahzuyot* which were intended to be kibbutzim in the future—were located in many of the most important and dangerous positions. Although many more moshavim than kibbutzim were established, the fact that the kibbutz movement, with its special military formation, was a vital part of the defence dispositions of the state, raised its members' morale, and restored in some measure the feeling of vocation which it had had in earlier years.

Until 1953 the speed and position of new settlement of all sorts was largely dictated by the urgent need to provide accommodation and means of livelihood for new immigrants. In the following year immigration slowed down, and gave the settlement authorities time to review policies and methods of work. In 1954, when the next sizeable wave of immigration, from North Africa, began, many of the new immigrants were directed to an area of planned settlement: Lachish, in the northern Negev. This was based on a symbiosis of moshavim mainly populated by new immigrants, kibbutzim, *moshavim shitufi'im*, a new development town, and several 'service villages' which provided social services for the area. The region was planned as an integrated system, with the veteran Israelis providing help and models of behaviour for the new immigrants. This model, considered to be most successful, was adopted in several other regions over the coming years. Thus, the kibbutzim were deliberately allocated the role of 'radiating values' which some of their ideologues had begun to emphasize a few years earlier.

The record of settlement in the period from the end of mass absorption (December 1954) until the Six-Day War of 1967 shows that eleven new kibbutzim were established. All of them were founded by Nahal groups, and four had originally been set up as *he'ahzuyot*. During the same period forty-nine new moshavim and six *moshavim shitufi'im* were founded; of these, two moshavim and two *moshavim shitufi'im* were Nahal foundations; 172 Nahal groups spent a significant part of their military service in established kibbutzim.¹³ These figures underline both

¹³ Douer, *Nahal Groups*, 223-35; Shoshani, *Kvutza and Kibbutz*; see also Appendix 1. Four of the new kibbutzim were re-foundations of settlements which had been founded between 1948 and 1950 and abandoned by the founding members.

the extent to which the Nahal supported the kibbutzim, and its special connection with the kibbutz as against other forms of settlement.

The new settlements were spread along the borders of Israel, from Yotvata and Eilat in the region of Eilat to Adamit on the Lebanese border, and from Ein Gedi on the northern coast of the Dead Sea to two small kibbutzim (Nahal Oz and Kfar Aza), originally Nahal outposts, facing the Gaza Strip. But the majority were situated on the central sector of the border, between Jordan, whence many infiltrators came, and the concentrated Jewish population on the coast. The kibbutz movement's numerical weakness prevented it from playing the predominant role in defence matters which it had fulfilled before the establishment of the state. But it was still to be found at the points of greatest danger.

After the Six-Day War

In June 1967 Israel's military fortunes changed dramatically within one week, from a situation which seemed to some of its leaders to be the verge of destruction to total victory over its neighbours, including the occupation of very considerable tracts of Egyptian, Jordanian, and Syrian territory. Most kibbutz members shared the euphoria of the victory, even though many of them had paid a high price in winning it.

The conquest of wide areas of Arab territory sparked off a national controversy, centring mainly on the question of settlement on the West Bank. Within the kibbutz movements, this controversy was expressed in matters of practical policy, and there was still a good deal of leeway for each movement to act in accordance with its own political preferences, within the framework of government policy. But, in the kibbutzim as in Israeli society at large, the question of settlement in the conquered territories—and particularly in those on the West Bank of the Jordan—began to be a major touchstone of political faith. The labour movement's standpoint remained firm: Jewish settlement was to be limited to areas which would be included in Israel's territory after the anticipated peace negotiations. The right demanded settlement in all the conquered territories, in order to pre-empt any chance of their being returned to Israel's neighbours. The rift between the two camps was exacerbated by the actions of Gush Emunim, a movement composed mainly of Orthodox Israelis, who began to create settlements on the West Bank in defiance of government policy. Their *modus operandi*, their faith and determination, even their dress, were reminiscent of the pioneers of the heroic period of the kibbutz movement. In a short time they had captured the imagination

of a wide sector of the public, who saw in them the 'true pioneers' of the post-1967 period.

The shadow of coming events was seen towards the end of 1975. A group founded by Gush Emunim made its way to a site of its own choosing on the West Bank, despite government opposition and attempts by the IDF to evacuate it, and founded what was to be the first of many settlements initiated by them and recognized retrospectively by the government. By adroit use of public opinion, the exploitation of sympathetic elements within the government, and the foundation of a political pressure group containing many activists from the kibbutz and moshav movements, they extended Jewish settlement to areas far beyond those to which the government was formally committed, and created an atmosphere in which such settlement was considered legitimate. With the victory of the Likud in May 1977 settlement in these areas was not only permitted, but became one of the keystones of government policy.

The kibbutz movements played their part in the increased settlement that followed the Six-Day War. This period saw the modest beginnings of what later became the massive Jewish settlement in the occupied territories, and most of the new kibbutzim were set up in these regions in accordance with the Allon plan, which formed the basis of the government's settlement policy. During the ten years after the war, nine new kibbutzim were founded on the Golan Heights, which by almost complete national consensus were intended to be under Israeli control. Two of the major provisions of the Allon plan were settlement in the sparsely populated Jordan river valley, and in north Sinai: six kibbutzim were set up in the former area, and two in the latter. The religious kibbutz movement re-founded three of its settlements which had been conquered and destroyed during the War of Independence: two in the Etzion bloc, south of Jerusalem, and one in the Gaza Strip. Six new kibbutzim were also set up within the borders of Israel: three in the eastern strip of the Negev (the Arava), bordering on Jordan, and three in Galilee, in an attempt to change the overwhelming majority of Arabs in the region. Altogether twenty-seven new kibbutzim were founded between 1967 and 1977.

There are significant differences between the post-1967 colonization and that of the preceding years, both in the proportion of kibbutzim and in the character of the other types of settlement. Kibbutzim constituted 30 per cent of the new rural foundations, as against rather less than 20 per cent in the previous decade. There was now no mass immigration, and virtually all the new settlements were populated by young Israelis. In

the case of the kibbutzim, recruitment through the youth movements and the Nahal was the general rule, though the enthusiasm generated by the war and its aftermath bred two new phenomena: 'private' settlement groups, spontaneously formed by 18-year-olds so that they could serve in the Nahal and thereafter join a new or existing kibbutz; and a few small youth movements whose only purpose was, in effect, to recruit new settlers. A high proportion of the moshavim and *moshavim shitufi'im* were founded by members of the second generation of the kibbutz and the moshav. In the case of the moshav, the opportunity for colonization helped to solve a basic problem of this type of village: while its structure and landholdings enabled the eldest sons, and in some cases the second eldest, to develop their own smallholdings in the village of their birth, there were very many younger children who had no hope of doing so. For such people, the new moshavim provided an ideal solution. With them were also to be found a good many young people born in veteran kibbutzim who wanted an agricultural, but not a communal, way of life. Members of these two groups formed the majority of the settlers in the northern region of the Sinai peninsula and the Jordan valley, and a high proportion of those on the Golan Heights. Moreover, two of the kibbutzim on the Golan Heights were founded by members of the younger generation of established kibbutzim who wanted to make a fresh start, away from their parents, for motives which were usually a mixture of the ideological and the personal.

ECONOMICS

Between 1951 and 1954 the fortunes and morale of the kibbutz movements and their standing in Israeli society had reached their nadir. The widespread failure of nerve described in Chapter 7 was compounded by the uncertainties of the economic situation. The veteran kibbutzim were in a relatively stable position, for they had learnt over the years to achieve a high standard of production on their own lands, and many of these were now augmented by abandoned Arab property. But the younger kibbutzim had yet to learn the characteristics of their local soil and climate. Many of them were composed of men and women with little agricultural experience, and the degree to which the kibbutz movements could help was very limited. The story of Beit Ha'emek in its early years (see Chapter 6) is typical of nearly a third of the 200 kibbutzim in existence at this time.¹⁴

¹⁴ *Statistical Abstract* (1951/2), tables 8, 15.

Despite this unpropitious beginning, by the end of Israel's first decade the kibbutzim were beginning to see themselves, and to be seen by those around them, as one of the most stable, and potentially one of the most prosperous, sectors of the economy.

Agriculture

During the period of stringent austerity in the early 1950s the kibbutzim concentrated on producing the basic foodstuffs needed for the survival of the new state. The pressures of the market and the needs of the rapidly expanding population meant that vegetables, poultry, and dairy products were at a premium. Arable crops could be sown and harvested with little, if any, extra capital investment. Vegetable production was limited mainly by the availability of water. Poultry and cattle farming, while both profitable and essential to the country, required capital investment in stock and buildings, and were therefore expanded less quickly.¹⁵

Towards the end of 1952 the period of austerity came to an end, and mass immigration began to slow down. The government machinery was now working reasonably well: taxes were collected, and there was the beginning of long-term social and economic planning. Most important of all, from the beginning of 1953 money and equipment entered the country in considerable quantities, as a result of the reparations agreement with West Germany.

The kibbutzim began to adapt their economy to the new conditions. In a certain sense, the fact that they had absorbed a comparatively small number of immigrants was to their advantage, for the kibbutz movement as a whole still contained a reasonably high proportion of developed kibbutzim and experienced workers. They showed much skill in adapting to new circumstances, and helped the less developed kibbutzim in a great many ways: by exchanging know-how, providing agricultural instructors, developing a network of courses in agricultural science and technology, and expanding the economic departments of the kibbutz movements. Moreover, unlike the family farms, the kibbutzim were big enough to make profitable use of the heavy machinery now coming into the country. As a result, the proportion of labour-intensive crops such as vegetables in the kibbutz economy was gradually reduced. By 1958, only 19 per cent of the country's vegetables were grown by kibbutzim, as against 61 per cent by moshavim; and these were mainly crops such as potatoes and carrots, cultivated and harvested by mechanized or semi-mechanized methods.¹⁶ By the end of 1953 Israel was self-sufficient in

¹⁵ Shatil, *Economy*, 375-6.

¹⁶ Gvati, *A Century of Settlement*, ii. 95.

most foodstuffs apart from grain, much of which was—and still is—imported. The kibbutzim continued to vary their economy, expanding their fruit orchards and adding varieties which had not been grown before the war. By 1960 the saturation of the local market and the possibilities of mechanization had prompted them to devote much of their land to cash crops. A high proportion of these was intended for export or to reduce imports; this applies particularly to cotton and sugar-beet, which became staple kibbutz crops, and were developed rapidly in terms both of area and of technical improvement during the next fifteen years.¹⁷

By the beginning of the 1970s, therefore, Israeli agriculture, including that of the kibbutz, had passed its first two stages: the production of essential foodstuffs during the austerity period, and the gradual development of industrial and export crops from the mid-1950s onwards. Surveys taken in 1971 and 1981 enable us to examine the further changes that took place during the following decade.¹⁸ In overall terms, all the rural sectors of Israel increased the profitability of their agricultural crops during this period, though not at an equal rate: the profits of the moshavim rose by 67 per cent, of the non-Jewish sector by 64 per cent, and of the kibbutzim by 57 per cent, while private Jewish farmers achieved a rise of only 37 per cent.¹⁹ The moshavim—particularly those established by new immigrants in the 1950s—had by now become familiar with their land and had acquired the necessary skills for successful agriculture, and many of the Arab farmers had effectively made the transition to modern methods of cultivation and marketing. The general pattern of crop production did not change greatly during the decade. A fairly consistent range of crops suitable to each type of settlement had crystallized, though with important variations: almost every kibbutz had large areas of field crops (mainly cotton and sugar-beet), and fruit orchards, in which export crops, primarily citrus fruit and avocados, ranked high; the great majority also had poultry and milking-cows. In all of these branches the relative size of the kibbutz, and the possibilities of mechanization—even automation of irrigation and the feeding of livestock—gave it an advantage over other forms of settlement. Private farmers tended to continue to cultivate their traditional crop, citrus fruit, and concentrated on the staple Shamuti variety (Jaffa oranges), while the many kibbutzim which had entered this branch during the 1960s were trying out new varieties,

¹⁷ Ibid. 92-102, 113-14, 164-83.

¹⁸ *Agricultural Census*, 2-14.

¹⁹ Ibid., table 4. Here and elsewhere in this survey, kibbutzim include *moshavim shitufi'im*.

in accordance with forecasts of future marketing possibilities. In the orchards there was a very strong trend towards avocados from other types of fruit: here again, the kibbutzim were motivated both by the desire to develop this excellent export crop and the possibilities of mechanized harvesting; but there was a similar tendency in all types of farm in the wake of an intensive campaign in Europe which opened up a very profitable market. Israeli flowers also began to make their mark abroad, but this labour-intensive branch was developed mainly by the moshavim.

Until the end of the 1970s this process of adapting the pattern of agricultural consumption to the availability of natural resources, the changing demands of the market, and the characteristics of the different types of farm continued, with a large measure of success. It was aided by government policy, expressed in several ways: differential exchange rates encouraged the development of goods (including agricultural produce) for export, and the price of water, largely determined by the Ministry of Agriculture, encouraged its use for irrigation. Many staple foods were subsidized: although this was done mainly in order to control the cost of living index to which most salaries were pegged, it also increased the market for and profitability of much agricultural produce—particularly poultry and dairy produce. The kibbutzim were also helped in coping with their financial difficulties by a special fund for the provision of credit, under the auspices of the Ministry of Agriculture. The consolidation and development of agriculture which took place in this decade was mostly the result of the skill, application, and sheer hard work of workers and managers in kibbutzim and moshavim alike. But it also owed much to the political and economic backing of the government and the civil service.

Many of the advances described here were made possible by the development of water resources. In 1952 Tahal, the national irrigation development authority, was established. Through its services water was brought to many settlements which had previously been without irrigation, and a national water plan developed. One part of it—the diversion of water from the Yarkon river, in the Tel Aviv area, to irrigate the northern Negev—was already in operation by 1953. In 1964 the National Water Carrier was inaugurated. This, a mammoth project by Israeli standards, brought water from Lake Kinneret through a system of open canals, reservoirs, and tunnels to the greatest reserve of undeveloped land in the state—the Negev. After its completion, and the conclusion of work on a number of complementary local projects, the water resources of the country were measured and, within the limits of the vagaries of nature, quite predictable. A law of 1959 laid down that they were the property of

the nation, and procedures were established for their allocation, price control, and other technical matters.²⁰

Between 1951 and 1958 the proportion of kibbutz land under irrigation grew from just under 7 per cent to more than 22 per cent. By 1965 it had reached 32 per cent, and by 1981 about 41 per cent.²¹ By the late 1960s it was possible to assess with a fair degree of accuracy the amount of land and water that would be available for agricultural settlement in the state as a whole, and in each individual kibbutz. Experiments in desalination proved prohibitively expensive, and it became clear that the growing population would strain existing resources to the utmost as domestic and industrial requirements increased. Thus by the end of the 1960s the kibbutz movements had reached the conclusion that, if they wished to provide gainful occupation for their members—both for young people returning to their homes after army service, and for recruits from the youth movements and other sources—they would have to find alternatives to agriculture. Hence an increasing preoccupation with the development of kibbutz industry.

Industry

The trend towards industrialization of the kibbutz economy became marked during the Second World War, when the most important manufacturing enterprises were connected with food processing. Although the kibbutz was still primarily an agricultural community, the middle and late 1950s saw an expansion of industry, in terms of both the size of the branches concerned and the type of product. Haim Barkai sums up the process thus:

By 1956 there were about 75 manufacturing enterprises run by 55 kibbutzim. The variety of lines in which they were engaged grew substantially—plastics and electronic equipment were added to the traditional food and metal processing enterprises . . . by the middle of the decade production was strongly slanted towards the wood and furniture industry.

Between 1945 and 1956 the capital stock [of kibbutz industry] grew by a factor of 18, and product grew fivefold. . . . The beginning of the kibbutz industrial era can be put at the end of the decade [i.e. the 1950s].

This trend was the forerunner of a massive growth in kibbutz industry over the next two decades. Barkai continues:

²⁰ Gvati, *A Century of Settlement*, ii. 144-55.

²¹ Barkai, *Growth Patterns*, 110; *Agricultural Census*, 8.

The number of [industrial] enterprises shot up from about 100 in 1960 to 170 at the end of the decade, and by 1973 [the concluding date of Barkai's data] there were 235 enterprises in 186 kibbutzim. Thus three quarters of the kibbutzim had by then entered manufacturing, about 40 of them with more than one enterprise.²²

This trend continued in the coming years. In 1977 there were 292 industrial enterprises in the 278 settlements (including *moshavim shituf'im*) then affiliated to the Federation of Kibbutz Industry. Only sixty-nine of the settlements had no industry at all, while fifty-one had two enterprises each, fifteen had three each, and two had four each. The majority—141—had only one factory.²³

This overall expansion was paralleled within the economy of the individual kibbutz. Barkai's research revealed a rapid growth of capital, product and sales figures, and profitability, as against the relatively slow progress of kibbutz agriculture. The 1970s also witnessed a great diversification of products, as the kibbutzim attempted to create industries more suitable to their social structure than the formerly predominant branches of food-processing and plywood and furniture manufacture, all of which were labour-intensive and relied on a high proportion of hired workers. Factories producing electronic equipment, precision tools, and a wide variety of plastic products, which gave scope for automation of production and the development of technical skills, were established.²⁴

These new industries relied on a high degree of technical knowledge and competence, and provided a challenge for the kibbutz-born generation now entering the economic system in large numbers. They also required considerable amounts of capital investment: in 1977, for instance, the average investment for each worker in the kibbutz industries was almost twice that for Israeli industry as a whole.²⁵ Here, as in the agricultural sector, the political climate was a major factor. The Ministry of Industry provided generous loans for industrial development, and these were supplemented by a 'complementary fund' set up by the Histadrut bank, Bank Hapoalim: 80 per cent of the capital for a promising project would usually be provided by these sources.

The report of the Federation of Kibbutz Industry issued in the spring of 1978 showed grounds for pride in achievement, and optimism about the future. Production had grown steadily over the previous decade,

²² *Growth Patterns*, 210, 212.

²³ FKI, *Report*, 38.

²⁴ Barkai, *Growth Patterns*, 211-23.

²⁵ IS33,800 per worker, as against IS17,300. Of these investments, 57% were in concerns producing plastics, rubber, and metal. FKI, *Report*, 33.

culminating in an increase of 25 per cent from 1976 to 1977. Average productivity per worker was 14 per cent higher than that in Israeli industry as a whole, and exports had increased over the year by 31 per cent, as against 26.4 per cent in all industry in Israel. In terms of kibbutz ideology, too, the trend seemed to be mainly positive: while the number of kibbutz members employed in industry had risen since 1973, the proportion of hired workers had decreased from 48 to 38 per cent.²⁶ There was, apparently, no doubt that the development of kibbutz industry was a success story.

This view was not confined to the kibbutz movements. The Federation of Kibbutz Industry invested a great deal of effort in public relations: in 1977 alone there appeared in the general press, in addition to several commercial supplements paid for by the Federation, twelve articles and news items on particular enterprises, or on kibbutz industry in general. In virtually every case the tone and conclusions were favourable, even in newspapers such as *Ha'aretz*, which was usually highly critical of the kibbutz.²⁷ A major work of economic research published in 1977 concluded that 'the kibbutz as a collective unit has shown that it has performed no worse, to say the least, than its market counterparts both as regards efficiency and saving rates'.²⁸

None the less, even in the FKI report of 1978 a number of negative tendencies can be discerned. Like the rest of the Israeli economy, the kibbutz industries suffered very badly from the 1973 war, when a high proportion of their workers were mobilized for about six months, and production almost came to a halt. In the economic slow-down which followed the war, exports were encouraged at the expense of the home market, and this had its effect on sales and profits: sales continued to rise, but much more slowly than before the war. Between 1973 and 1977 sales by Israeli industry as a whole rose steadily and reached 127.3 per cent of the 1973 level, while kibbutz industry sales, having advanced slowly to 111 per cent of their 1973 level in 1976, plummeted in the following year to 101.3 per cent.²⁹ There was a similar trend in the kibbutz industries' gross production figures, which had shown an annual growth rate of 21.4 per cent between 1956 and 1965, and 15 per cent from then

²⁶ *Ibid.* 32-3, 59, 68.

²⁷ References to newspaper articles are collected in Doron, *The Kibbutz as an Educational Topic*, 165-84. The articles referred to do not include *Davar* (the Histadrut daily) and *Al Hamishmar* (the Mapam daily), which could be expected to favour the kibbutzim and published a great many articles about kibbutz industry.

²⁸ Barkai, *Growth Patterns*, p. viii.

²⁹ FKI, *Report*, 37.

until 1973, but whose growth rate then dropped drastically.³⁰ Moreover, the proportion of kibbutz industrial production to that of the country as a whole declined from 4.9 per cent in 1973 to 3.7 per cent in 1977.³¹ Most serious of all, the level of investment, on which the kibbutz industries relied not only for expansion but also for renewal of equipment and for research and development, was reduced to 77.1 per cent of the 1973 level, compared with 83.6 per cent in Israeli industry as a whole.

It should be emphasized that these figures relate to the period before the advent of the Likud government and the initiation of its new economic policy. Even in the comparatively favourable economic climate of the time, kibbutz industries showed signs of weakness which tended to tarnish their very positive image.

Regional Development

In this period of increasing prosperity, the kibbutz movements developed means of providing financial aid and advice to their kibbutzim. In the mid-1930s each movement had established a central fund which provided short-term loans. To these were now added purchasing organizations, which were able to use the advantage of size in order to buy in bulk and to advance credit to individual kibbutzim.

Another form of mutual aid between kibbutzim began to appear in the late 1950s. The combination of mechanization and constantly increasing efficiency in the application of technological research led to ever greater yields in the agricultural branches. As a result, enterprises were established on a regional basis in order to provide services and equipment cheaply and efficiently. An early example of this was in the Sha'ar Hanegev area, in the north-west of the Negev, where a number of kibbutzim had to use heavy equipment such as large ploughs, bulldozers, and combine harvesters over extensive areas to produce crops, particularly cotton, which varied little between different kibbutzim. Buying the equipment in partnership and allocating it to each settlement according to a rota system led to a considerable saving. In the wake of this arrangement, a garage and mechanical workshop was set up to service the equipment, and soon began to take on a much wider variety of work. Similar arrangements were made in other areas and with other types of equipment, according to local needs. By the end of the 1970s there were

³⁰ A report to an Israeli bank (Bank Leumi) in 1982 states that the gross product of kibbutz industry between 1973 and 1982 had increased at an average annual rate of only 2.6%. While it is certain that the rate dropped after 1977, it seems that it was already low by then. Bonjak and Borochoy, *Kibbutz Industry*, 4.

³¹ FKI, *Report*, 40.

thirteen clusters of regional enterprises spread throughout the whole of the country. Among other concerns they included fruit- and vegetable-packing plants, chicken slaughterhouses, mills for mixing chicken- and cattle-feed, cotton gins, and, in one region, a laundry which served the local kibbutzim. The most ambitious of these conglomerates, Miluot in Western Galilee, also set up factories for extracting cottonseed oil, for processing domestic and industrial waste, and for producing a variety of processed foods.³²

A good many of these industrial processes were not easily mechanized, and the regional enterprises came to rely on hired labour for the less skilled tasks, while the managerial and technical posts were largely filled by kibbutz members. This process was, however, only one aspect of a problem that had been dogging the kibbutz movement since the early 1950s.

Hired Labour

Until the 1940s, the hiring of workers who were not kibbutz members was anathema in all varieties of kibbutz ideology. For a short period in the late 1920s some of the *kvutzot* in the Jordan valley had employed hired labour as a temporary expedient; one of the major reasons for their union with Gordonia was the desire to put an end to this practice.³³ In fact, 'outsiders' often worked in the kibbutzim: some, such as doctors, nurses, and teachers, actually lived there; other experts, such as engineers, were called in from time to time. But professionals were often employed by some outside agency such as the Histadrut health fund; and, even in those cases where a kibbutz paid them directly, they were the social equals of the members, who did not therefore feel that they were exploiting them. It was, however, a different matter to hire workers in the productive branches, to enjoy the fruits of their labour, but to treat them as employees rather than partners in the work process.

It was just this situation which was to be found in many kibbutzim towards the end of the Second World War. Every kibbutz was strained to the utmost by mobilization to the armed forces and the heavy demands for manpower made by its expanded economy. Virtually all 'outside workers'³⁴ had been called home, and a quite considerable

³² Daniel, *Regional Cooperation*, 34-5, augmented by the author's personal knowledge.

³³ See *KM* i. 154-5.

³⁴ Kibbutz members working for employers outside the kibbutz. This was a very important source of income, particularly for young and undeveloped kibbutzim, during the late 1930s. See *KM* i. 338.

number of men and women from outside the kibbutzim were hired, particularly for harvesting and in the developing industrial enterprises. It was assumed that after the end of the emergency the kibbutz could once again become self-sufficient in matters of employment. By 1950, however, it had become clear that this aim was exceedingly difficult to achieve. Those kibbutzim which had established industries during the war were expanding them in response to the demands of the rapidly swelling population, and this was seen as an important contribution to the development of the Israeli economy. During the period of austerity it was essential to increase yields of products such as milk and vegetables, many of which were labour-intensive. As a result, outside workers were employed in agriculture as well as in industry. By March 1950 there were close on a thousand in the Kibbutz Me'uhad alone.³⁵

In the accepted ideology of the kibbutz, this situation involved an inherent contradiction between the short-term objective of increased production and the long-term aspiration to build a society free from the exploitation of man by man. But, even within the kibbutz movements, there was a minority of revisionist thinkers who presented the employment of Jewish workers as a Zionist imperative. They pointed out that their capital—land, industrial plant, and technical know-how—was not only the result of their own efforts: much of it had been put at their disposal by the Zionist movement in order to further national objectives such as strategic settlement and economic growth. Now that the order of national priorities had changed, they argued that this capital should be employed to further the economic absorption of new immigrants.

As mentioned in Chapter 7, Ben-Gurion stimulated and reinforced these attitudes. In 1950 he demanded that, instead of aiming at a self-sufficient economy, the kibbutzim should help to solve the problem of absorption by employing new immigrants. How could it be, he asked at a meeting at Ein Harod, that thousands were living in camps at public expense while the kibbutzim, so desperately short of working hands, refused to provide employment for them? He compared the opposition to hired labour to the Jewish prohibition of work on the Sabbath. During the war the rabbinate had given permission to fight on the Sabbath, and even to eat on Yom Kippur because of the state of emergency. Was the kibbutz movement to be more rigid than the Orthodox establishment?³⁶

³⁵ Minutes of Kibbutz Me'uhad Central Committee, 8 Mar. 1950. Kibbutz Me'uhad archives, 1b, 8, file 36, 98.

³⁶ Ben-Gurion, 'The Task of the Pioneers in the Ingathering of the Exiles', in *id.*, *Vision and Way*, iii. 18-35.

On the ideological level this demand was fiercely opposed by almost all the leaders of the kibbutz movements, of every political complexion. Both the Kibbutz Me'uhad and the Kibbutz Artzi saw Ben-Gurion's demands as an attempt to weaken the kibbutz, and undermine the socialist character of the new state. Nor were the leaders of Hever Hakvutzot any more enthusiastic; they feared that by becoming employers kibbutz members would undergo a process of moral degeneration, and lose any hope of influencing the surrounding society to adopt egalitarian values.

Economic realities proved to be too strong for these misgivings. Encouraged by the government's policy of granting loans and other forms of help to kibbutzim which employed new immigrants, the number of kibbutzim which took on hired labour, particularly in industry and building work, grew apace. Ben-Gurion's ideological campaign, the emotive force of the proximity of many *ma'abarot* with their miserable conditions and high rate of unemployment, and economic self-interest, all played their part in reconciling many to this phenomenon.

By 1951 the kibbutzim were employing some 1,400 hired workers.³⁷ By 1958 this number had reached 7,500, and by 1965 almost 10,000—about 19 per cent of the total labour force.³⁸ By this time, the leaders of the kibbutz movements were extremely alarmed: even those who had agreed that the kibbutzim should become employers as a response to the challenge of the first years of the state had not envisaged that this would turn into a permanent situation. The forecast of the ideologists in the controversy of the early 1950s had come true: from being a temporary measure, the use of hired labour had become a structural problem.³⁹

One of the reasons for this was the rapid growth of the kibbutz industries. The first kibbutz factories, in the oldest and biggest kibbutzim, dealt with food processing, and in the mid-1950s several wood and furniture plants were established. These were all labour-intensive. The result was that in 1958 about a quarter of the industrial manpower of the kibbutz movement, and some 60 per cent of all hired workers, were employed in five large enterprises, each employing several hundred workers. During the 1960s, in a deliberate attempt to reduce the proportion of hired labour, most new enterprises were smaller, and were concentrated in science-based industries such as plastics, electronics, and precision tools.⁴⁰ In agriculture, the proportion of hired workers was about half that in industry. Here, too, efforts were made to concentrate

³⁷ This is an estimate, since there are no precise figures for the early 1950s. On the difficulty of establishing the true figures, see Daniel, *Hired Labour*, ch. 3.

³⁸ Barkai, *Growth Patterns*, 91, 104.

³⁹ *Ibid.* 102-4.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 202.

on industrial crops, which were more easily mechanized, rather than the market gardening which had played an important part in the kibbutz economy in the early 1950s.

Even so, the problem remained unsolved. By the end of the 1960s the percentage of hired workers in the fields and factories of individual kibbutzim was more or less steady, although there were marked differences between the kibbutz movements. The Ihud, whose ideological misgivings were, as we have seen, much weaker than those of the other movements—and which owned some of the biggest factories—employed by far the greatest proportion: in 1969 hired workers made up 15 per cent of its labour force, as against 6.5 per cent in both the Kibbutz Artzi and the Kibbutz Me'uhad. If the workers in the regional enterprises are included these numbers must be increased by about half.⁴¹

At the end of the 1960s it seemed that the problem was gradually being overcome, at least in the individual kibbutzim. Agriculture was, in the main, highly mechanized, and much of the work of processing and packing had been transferred to the regional enterprises. The problem of temporary labour for seasonal work was eased in the wake of the Six-Day War, as large numbers of volunteers from abroad arrived in the country and were sent to work in the kibbutzim, filling in for the members who had been mobilized during the emergency. From that time on, voluntary workers from abroad—usually high-school pupils, university students, or recent graduates—became an accepted component of the workforce of every kibbutz. Each of the kibbutz movements opened an office to recruit, select, and allocate these working visitors, and most kibbutzim built special accommodation for them. Between 1968 and 1970 the proportion of hired workers went down in all the movements, and it seemed as though this tendency would lead to their gradual elimination.⁴²

The reasons why this did not happen are many and complex. The most fundamental was the constant shortage of manpower: without reinforcements, the permanent residents could not exploit to the full their resources in land and in capital for industrial expansion. This situation, which was in sharp contrast to that which had prevailed before 1948, stemmed from the addition of land and water in the 1950s, from the availability of government credit in Israel's rapidly expanding economy, the decline in recruitment to the kibbutzim from 1949 onwards, and the fact that the younger generation did not become a quantitatively

⁴¹ Daniel, *Hired Labour*, 51-2.

⁴² Barkai, most of whose statistics apply to the years ending in 1970 or 1971, remarks that the increase in hired labour was contained in 1965-70: *Growth Patterns*, 221-2.

significant factor in the kibbutz economy until the mid-1960s.⁴³ In addition, the crops introduced and developed in the 1960s and 1970s required more seasonal labour, and the best intentions of the kibbutz planners were unable to withstand the demands of the market, and of the governmental authorities, to increase industrial production.⁴⁴

All of these pressures existed at both the local and the national level. The kibbutz movements did their best to resist them, with some success: they gave technical advice and financial incentives for the revision of crop plans in order to reduce requirements for mass labour; promoted investment in less labour-intensive industries; directed temporary labour to kibbutzim with special needs; and devised a system of financial incentives to encourage kibbutzim to employ fewer outside workers. However, these efforts had little overall effect. A report on the activities of the committee for reducing hired labour in the Ihud, published by that movement's control commission in June 1980, points to a reduction of 3.7 per cent between 1973 and 1977; and in a similar period (1973-6), the total number of hired workers in the kibbutz industries had also fallen—by as much as 20 per cent.⁴⁵ In the following year this proportion had risen by 4 per cent, casting doubt on the belief that a long-term trend had set in. Within seven years the proportion of hired workers had doubled.⁴⁶ All of the difficulties mentioned above had conspired to bring about a fundamental, and perhaps permanent, change in the kibbutz way of life and work.

Standards of Living

In Chapter 7 I quoted Haim Barkai's analysis showing that in terms of housing and public building the kibbutzim had caught up with the Israeli economy as a whole by 1954.⁴⁷ His comparison of living standards in the kibbutz with those in the rest of Israel, based on disposable income and measures of consumption, concludes in 1965. At that time, he says:

It is plausible to suggest that the kibbutz living standard as measured by per capita disposable income was similar to the characteristic living standard of

⁴³ On the basis of a detailed analysis of agricultural production in the 1960s, Avraham Daniel has concluded that, compared with the amounts considered by the settlement authorities sufficient for a livelihood, the kibbutzim had a surplus of land and water. *Hired Labour*, 55-66.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 66-9.

⁴⁵ FKI, *Report*, 59.

⁴⁶ Ihud, *Report of the Control Commission*, 10. The author's discussions with the heads of the parallel committees in the other two movements in 1974-6 confirmed that the same tendencies existed in all the movements.

⁴⁷ Barkai, *Growth Patterns*, 118.

the sixth decile of the population of Israel. This, of course, places the kibbutz population relatively high within the array of population classified by living standards. . . .

Per capita consumption . . . was about 85 per cent of the country average. This too suggests that the living standard achieved by the kibbutzim in the 1960s hardly puts them at a disadvantage.

It seems that during the 1960s living standards rose more rapidly than those of the country as a whole: from 1959 to 1966, for instance, consumption budgets in the Kibbutz Artzi increased by 165 per cent, while the country's standard of living index rose only by 72 per cent. By the early 1970s this process was modified, and standards rose at roughly the same pace as those of the rest of the country: between 1971 and 1975 expenditure on consumption in the kibbutzim of the Kibbutz Artzi rose by 2.5 per cent every year, as did that in Israel outside the kibbutz.⁴⁸ In the early 1950s the area of a standard house for a kibbutz couple whose children slept in dormitories was 12 square metres. As I mentioned in Chapter 5, by the 1950s this had risen to 25-30 square metres for a veteran family, and by 1960, when the accepted level included a shower and toilet for each family, this had risen to 32, though the reality, particularly in the younger kibbutzim, was often very different. Ten years later the standard kibbutz dwelling included separate space for a bedroom and storage cupboards—52 square metres in all, while in kibbutzim where children slept in their parents' houses an extra 12 square metres were added. Comparisons with town dwellings are difficult to make, since space for cooking, recreation, and other functions in the kibbutz was communal. But it may be mentioned that in the 1950s the minimum area of a standard government-built apartment was 50 square metres, rising to 85 by 1980.⁴⁹

Changes in living standards are not only expressed in statistics. During the 1960s and 1970s the physical aspect of the typical kibbutz settlement underwent a number of fundamental changes. By 1977 all except those founded in the previous few years had solidly built, architect-designed dining-rooms instead of the temporary huts which had formerly been the rule. A network of paved footpaths made it possible to walk outdoors in residential areas without wading through ankle-deep mud or dust. Communal showers and toilets were a thing of the past, except for the temporary population: each family home had its own sanitary facilities, as well

⁴⁸ Kibbutz Artzi, *Goal and Deed*, i. 34; Kibbutz Artzi, *From Conference to Conference*, 57-9.

⁴⁹ Gaster, 'On the Question of Accommodation'.

as a small kitchen and, in most cases, separate bedrooms and sitting-rooms. Lawns and public gardens were developed and well tended, and the appropriate departments of the kibbutz movements assisted in long-term planning. Standards of food and clothing kept pace with those of the non-kibbutz population in the middle- or lower-middle-class income bracket. Those who came to the kibbutz from town seeking an improvement in their quality of life were rarely disappointed by the physical conditions they found there. It is little wonder, therefore, that both within the kibbutz movements and outside them it was often said that the kibbutz was 'becoming bourgeois'.

POLITICS

Mapai and the Labour Party

From 1948 to 1967 Mapai⁵⁰ was the leading force in Israeli politics and the principal partner in every government, though at no stage was it strong enough to form an administration by itself. But during this period it underwent far-reaching changes, many of which stemmed from the personality and actions of David Ben-Gurion. In the early years of the state he was the undisputed leader not only of his own party but of the State of Israel, enjoying support and trust far beyond the purely political sphere. In 1953, however, he resigned from his posts as prime minister and minister of defence, and joined a young settlement, Sdeh Boker in the Negev, 'for a year or two', on the grounds that he was suffering from spiritual fatigue after some thirty years of unremitting effort. His place as premier was taken by Moshe Sharett, and as defence minister by Pinhas Lavon, the former leader of Gordonia.

Ben-Gurion's retirement did not last long. In February 1955, in the wake of an abortive sabotage attempt by Israeli agents in Egypt, Sharett and Lavon were forced out of office, and Ben-Gurion resumed both his ministerial roles. He adopted an aggressive policy towards Arab infiltrators, and cultivated Israel's relationship with France—two strands of policy which culminated in the Suez campaign of 1956.

Ben-Gurion resigned for the second time in 1963. In essence, both Levi Eshkol, who succeeded him, and Golda Meir, who became prime minister after Eshkol's death in 1963, continued his defence and foreign policies. Meir was the last prime minister of the pre-state generation of Mapai leaders. Yitzhak Rabin's accession to power in 1974 symbolized

⁵⁰ From 1967 the Israeli Labour Party, of which Mapai formed the major component.

the political coming of age of the younger, mainly Israeli-born, generation, who had been engaged in a fierce struggle for the succession since the early 1960s. It was also the expression of a widely felt disillusion among the Israeli public with a party that had been in power uninterrupted for close on two generations, and was generally regarded as corrupt, particularly at the lower echelons of administration and politics. With the failure to foresee the Yom Kippur War, the party, together with much of the security establishment, lost the halo of virtual invincibility in security matters which had been one of its major assets. The selection of Rabin, the victor of the Six-Day War, was a sign that the younger generation was coming into its own. It was also an assertion that, despite the failures of the former leadership, the Labour Party was still supreme in matters of security.

In economic affairs, the second half of the 1950s had been characterized by a relaxation of government controls and rapid development of the economy, which led to a high rate of inflation, curbed by a series of devaluations. This policy was moderated by Ben-Gurion's successor, Levi Eshkol; and 'cooling down' of the economy led to a severe recession in 1965-6, which came to an end with the Six-Day War. With this exception, however, the influence of Pinhas Sapir—first as minister of commerce and industry, later as finance minister—was dominant in the decade which ended with his resignation from the government in 1974. Sapir's encouragement of economic expansion in private, Histadrut-owned, and governmental sectors alike led to the consolidation of struggling new towns and the opening of many new institutions of higher education, and set the pattern of Israel's economy for many years to come.

Together with the freeing of the forces of economic enterprise, the hallmark of 'Sapirism', came the obverse side of developing capitalism. Social inequality increased rapidly, mainly affecting the poorer sectors of society—most of them composed of recent immigrants from the Middle Eastern countries.

The economic and ethnic tensions within Israeli society were slow to make themselves felt in the political system. The first indication which came to public attention was a riot in Wadi Salib, a Haifa slum, in 1959. From then on, however, it became increasingly apparent that the 'pressure-cooker' theory, according to which new immigrants would quickly be assimilated into Israeli society and values, was far from correct: Israeli society was divided along class lines which very largely matched ethnic divisions. Throughout the 1960s academics and others forecast that the

Sephardi Jews, by now well on the way to forming a majority in the country, would become a revolutionary force.⁵¹ But left-wing politics (including a conciliatory attitude to the Arabs) were associated with the Ashkenazi establishment, whose virtual monopoly of power the Sephardim resented deeply. By an astute policy of recruitment and propaganda the opposition Likud Party gained massive support among the Sephardi sector, and the combination of social discontent and nationalist sentiment swept Likud into power in 1977.

The Ihud

Although the common denominator of the kibbutzim which joined together in 1951 to form the Ihud was political support for Mapai, the movement was never formally affiliated to that or any other party. A circular to party members in Ihud Hakibbutzim, the Mapai splinter group of the Kibbutz Me'uhad, which was shortly to unite with Hever Hakvutzot to form the Ihud, declared:

After the recent changes resulting from the split in the Kibbutz Me'uhad and the foundation of Ihud Hakibbutzim, we must repeat, *with special emphasis*, that there is no identity between the kibbutz which forms part of Ihud Hakibbutzim and the branch of Mapai in that kibbutz. Ihud Hakibbutzim does not oblige its members to belong to Mapai. There must, therefore, be an independent branch of the party in every kibbutz. . . . We intend to deal in our branches only with matters concerning the party. Therefore, you must preserve the framework of the branch, acquire new members, increase party activities and deepen your propaganda work for the party.⁵²

This approach set the pattern for the Ihud throughout its existence. Political activities were conducted neither by the kibbutz nor by the movement as a whole, as in the case of the Kibbutz Me'uhad and the Kibbutz Artzi, but in the framework of a district (*mahoz*), parallel to those representing the big towns and the moshavim.⁵³ Mapai members in the Ihud were represented according to the size of their membership, but were given extra weight in the central bodies of the party: kibbutz and moshav members were given the equivalent of 1.5 votes in internal elections.⁵⁴

⁵¹ e.g. Peres, *Ethnic Identity*.

⁵² Circular no. 5069, from Yitzhak Feniger, central office of Mapai, 27 June 1951. Ihud archives, Hulda, 9/226.

⁵³ One consequence of this was that the kibbutzim of Ha'oved Hatzioni, which were politically connected with the Progressive Party, were able to join the Ihud.

⁵⁴ Ben-David, *Political Status*, 23.

Over the years, the developments in the international Communist movement which rocked Mapam to its foundations confirmed the leaders of the Ihud in their basic stance; and Soviet support for the Arab cause from 1954 onwards reinforced their view that the USSR was an imperialist and opportunistic power, which had no essential sympathy with the Zionist cause. There was, however, no such consensus within the movement regarding the complex of issues which troubled and eventually split Mapai in the early 1960s: the Lavon affair.

Pinhas Lavon had been defence minister in 1954, at the time of the abortive action in Egypt which led to the imprisonment of several Israeli agents, two of whom were executed. Though he maintained that the order for the action had been given without his knowledge, he resigned from his post, and was replaced by Ben-Gurion. In 1959, when he was general secretary of the Histadrut, he demanded political rehabilitation, including nomination to a governmental post. Ben-Gurion's refusal led to a series of accusations and counter-accusations, ministerial committees, and crises within Mapai. Ben-Gurion's demand for a judicial committee of inquiry was refused, and this eventually led to his resignation from office and from Mapai. In 1965 he formed a new party, Rafi (Reshimat Poalei Israel—the Israeli Workers' List), which after the elections of that year had ten Knesset members, as against the forty-five of the electoral alliance of Mapai and Ahdut Ha'avoda, and the eight of Mapam. Over the coming years the differences between these three parties narrowed: the Lavon affair became little more than a historical memory, and Ahdut Ha'avoda and Mapam virtually abandoned their pro-Soviet stance. In 1968 Ahdut Ha'avoda, Rafi, and Mapai combined to form the Israeli Labour Party, which was usually ready to form an electoral alliance with Mapam.

At the time of the Lavon controversy there were serious apprehensions that the Ihud would divide as the Kibbutz Me'uhad had done a decade earlier. A number of its leading figures supported Ben-Gurion, and a fairly large group, led by ex-members of Netzah, left Mapai with him to become founder members of Rafi. On the other hand, a substantial group of ex-members of Gordonia within the Ihud supported Lavon. They were among the leaders of a group called Min Hayesod, which left Mapai at the end of 1964 for about two years in protest against the party's failure to give Lavon its full support.

A number of factors combined to save the Ihud from a disastrous schism like that of 1951. The memories of the split in the Kibbutz Me'uhad were still fresh in the minds of the leaders of both factions

within the movement, and they were very wary of repeating that experience: for instance, Senta Josephtal, the Ihud's general secretary, was very sympathetic to the aims and ideals of Rafi, but she deliberately refrained from joining the party or expressing overt support for it. The structure of political activity in the Ihud, which enabled all three factions to conduct their activities alongside the formal structure of the movement, prevented the controversy from affecting vital issues of education and manpower, as had happened during the Mapai/Mapam split. And, perhaps most important, there had been a perceptible change in the political culture of the country, and of the kibbutz movements, over the past decade: in none of the movements was politics now seen to be an overriding element in the ideology or practice of the kibbutz. In the Ihud there was a marked tendency towards the view that the main contributions of the kibbutz to Israeli society lay in the areas of defence, settlement, and economic development rather than social change; and this was paralleled in the other movements by the growing disillusionment with Communism.

Thus the Ihud managed without much difficulty to contain the Lavon controversy, and continued to flourish as a settlement movement. It was connected with a number of youth movements at the centre of the political spectrum, and could present itself as a non-political organization concerned with the interests of the country as a whole, in contrast to Kibbutz Me'uhad and Kibbutz Artzi, which were finding it increasingly difficult to justify their separate political existence.

In fact, the Ihud was never completely divorced from Mapai. Its 'district' was over-represented in the elections to the party conference, in Mapai's central committee, and in the Knesset, and its general secretary was automatically a member of the party secretariat. As a matter of course its members were mobilized through the central movement machinery to help the party, particularly during elections. But this support, which depended on the goodwill of the rank and file, was given with increasing reluctance as Mapai's popularity declined in the Ihud, as in the rest of the country. At the same time, the movement's non-political stance led to an increase in the number of non-Mapai supporters and voters among its members.⁵⁵ This trend culminated in the general elections of 1977, when considerable minorities within the Ihud voted for Yig'al Yadin's 'Party for Democratic Change', and a small number even supported the Likud.

Although there were clear signs of the Labour Party's decline in popu-

⁵⁵ Ariel, 'Ihud Hakvutzot Vehakibbutzim'.

larity and the possibility of its defeat at the polls, the electoral upheaval of 1977 came as an almost complete surprise to the party establishment, including the political activists of the Ihud. For the past three years they had been engaged in intensive discussion of two interconnected questions: how to increase the Ihud's involvement in the political process, and whether there was any possibility of unity between two or more of the kibbutz movements. The move to repoliticize the Ihud after two decades of what many described as 'political impotence' resulted from the reaction of several of its leaders to the Yom Kippur War. They felt that the leadership of the Labour Party had been found wanting, and they, like many ordinary members, demanded the right to express their dissatisfaction. But the Ihud's political structure prevented it from participating as a movement in the plethora of protest groups, including new political formations, which sprang up in the wake of the war. At the same time, it was clear that the Ihud by itself could scarcely become a political force with any degree of influence. Only by joining with other kibbutz movements—preferably in an act of overall unification but, if necessary, only with the Kibbutz Me'uhad, which already supported the same party—could it amass the minimum of strength required to make it a force within the Labour Party. So the Ihud initiated a series of discussions with the other two major movements. The Kibbutz Artzi responded with little enthusiasm, the Kibbutz Me'uhad positively, but with great caution, for its own leaders were divided on the issue.⁶⁶

The defeat of the Labour Party in 1977 hastened this process, and in 1980 the Ihud and the Kibbutz Me'uhad merged to form the United Kibbutz Movement. Its constitution openly declared support for the Labour Party, which 'enjoyed the support of the great majority of its members', while permitting freedom of speech and organization to members of the movement who supported other parties.

Kibbutz Me'uhad and Kibbutz Artzi

The widespread disillusion which swept the Communist parties of the world in the wake of the twentieth conference of the Russian Communist party in 1956 began rather earlier for the Israeli left, with the Prague trial and the subsequent agonizing reappraisal and split in Mapam. After leaving Mapam in 1954 Ahdut Ha'avoda had a small but fairly steady following in the country, based largely on its struggle for social equality and its demand for a more militant policy on the part of the trade unions

⁶⁶ Aharonson, 'Path to Unity', 22-39.

and the Histadrut. It still clung to some of the symbols of its pro-Soviet stance, such as participation in the Communist-controlled World Federation of Youth. But now that the major source of conflict with Mapai had been removed, its traditional constructivist tendencies came to the fore. From 1958 onwards Ahdut Ha'avoda was a regular partner in government coalitions, and took part in an electoral alliance with Mapai from 1964 until January 1967 when both of these parties were merged, together with Rafi, in the Israeli Labour Party.

Paradoxically, the formation of the Labour Party increased the separatism of the Kibbutz Me'uhad. In its first three years the party was ruled by groups representing the former leadership of Mapai, Rafi, and Ahdut Ha'avoda, and the Kibbutz Me'uhad was the only framework in which this last group had any real existence. In the years immediately following the Six-Day War its leaders were interested in retaining this power for reasons of policy. Yitzhak Tabenkin was one of the leaders of the Movement for Greater Israel, which supported the retention and settlement of the territories conquered in the war, and these objectives were shared by the majority in the Kibbutz Me'uhad. Over the years, however, his support was gradually eroded, particularly under the moderating influence of Yig'al Allon, an ex-Palmach general and one of the leading political figures of the Kibbutz Me'uhad during the 1970s. Allon's plan for a territorial compromise with Jordan, though never formally approved by the Labour Party, became the *de facto* basis for its settlement policy until its fall from power in 1977.

None the less, the hawkish stance of the Kibbutz Me'uhad made itself felt. In particular, Israel Galili, though for much of this period a minister without portfolio, was very influential in formulating official policy, especially in the government of Golda Meir from 1969 to 1973. The struggle within the Kibbutz Me'uhad between the younger, more pragmatic, generation and the old guard, led by Tabenkin and Galili, continued until the electoral defeat of 1977. The policy debate also expressed itself in more concrete political terms, in a conflict between Allon, who advocated unity between Ahdut Ha'avoda and Mapai, and Tabenkin, who believed that without political independence the Kibbutz Me'uhad would lose its *raison d'être*. With the tacit adoption of the Allon plan by the Kibbutz Me'uhad there was little difference between its policies and those of the majority in the Labour Party—and, therefore, in the Ihud. The way to unification was open.⁵⁷

The Kibbutz Artzi's disillusionment with the Soviet Union was

⁵⁷ Ibid. 97-101.

hastened by the Six-Day War. This movement went through a process similar to that of the Kibbutz Me'uhad, though at a later date. By the late 1960s it had dropped the demand for pro-Soviet orientation in foreign policy. It retained its independence, however, resting on a political platform which emphasized the aspiration to social equality, resistance to the influence of the Orthodox Jewish establishment, and a positive policy towards the Arabs, including a constant search for opportunities to make peace with the Arab states, and social equality for the Arab minority in Israel. Despite these divergences from the policy of the majority in Mapai—many of which were shared by various groups within that party—in January 1969 Mapam entered an electoral alliance with the Labour Party, which lasted until the formation of the government of national unity in 1985.

The Kibbutz Movements in the Political System

The years between 1954 and 1977 saw a marked decline in the influence of the kibbutz movements on the Israeli political system. As can be seen from Table 9.1, the movements were greatly over-represented in the Knesset throughout the period. Gradually, however, their parliamentary strength was reduced: in 1965 it was more than four times the proportion of the kibbutz in the general population; by 1977 this factor had been reduced to two.

One of the reasons for this phenomenon is the existence of two kibbutz-led parties, a high proportion of whose cadre of leadership was based on the kibbutzim. But the Ihud's influence in Mapai was also greater than its share in the Israeli population warranted, as can be seen in Table 9.1. During these years the over-representation of the kibbutzim underwent a gradual decline, partly modified by the fact that the constitution of Mapai granted extra weight to the votes of its rural membership and by the automatic inclusion of members of the Knesset and of the central committee of the Histadrut in the executive bodies of the party. A similar tendency is apparent in the representation of the kibbutzim in Ahdut Ha'avoda and Mapam, although the continued dominance of the kibbutz movements in these two parties ensured that they had a higher proportion of kibbutz members in the Knesset than Mapai.⁵⁸

Many factors combined to reduce the political influence of the kibbutz movements. Among them were the decline in the status of the kibbutz

⁵⁸ See Table 9.1.

itself, heightened by the after-effects of the controversies and schisms of the 1950s; the changes in political culture brought about by the scepticism and political apathy of the younger generation in the kibbutzim, as elsewhere; and the more inwardly directed aims of kibbutz ideology resulting from the post-state crisis. Moreover, after their disenchantment with Communism the policies of both Ahdut Ha'avoda and Mapam moved closer to those of Mapai: the edge of political controversy was blunted, and it seemed as if the main political issue for each of the kibbutz movements was the defence of its interests, in partnership with the Mapai establishment. Both Mapam and Ahdut Ha'avoda continued to be controlled mainly by their respective kibbutz movements, though their urban sectors grew constantly stronger, and each had its own nuances of policy, which assured it a certain amount of electoral support from among the general public.

If we ask what their concrete achievements in influencing policy were, it is hard to give a definite answer. The exigencies of coalition politics forced them to agree to a long series of compromises, which left them little freedom of manoeuvre within the government. Some of their ministers were efficient and popular administrators, but no more so than many of their Mapai counterparts. On the Arab question, always a prominent item on the Mapam programme, they had little influence, if any, on the making of foreign policy; and the major advance in the conditions of Israeli Arabs—the abolition of the harsh and discriminatory military government regime in 1966—seems to have been the result of a personal decision by Levi Eshkol, the prime minister, rather than of any special pressure by Mapam. As for the Kibbutz Me'uhad, we have already seen that it reached its point of greatest influence after the merger of Ahdut Ha'avoda in the Labour Party; Yitzhak Ben-Aharon's four years as Histadrut secretary, though rich in dramatic incident and declarations of intent, are generally judged to have been quite ineffective. On the other hand, their activities undoubtedly achieved some real, though rather intangible, successes. Simply by their propaganda, by their activities at election time and in the Knesset, and by their educational work in the youth movements under their influence, they kept a number of issues before the eyes of the Israeli public, and prevented them from being the sole province of extreme and sometimes anti-Zionist parties.

It is noteworthy that, even when kibbutz members came close to the peak of the political establishment, they rarely occupied central policy-making positions. An analysis of the periods of service of kibbutz members as cabinet ministers between 1948 and 1977 shows a degree of

TABLE 9.1 Kibbutz members in Knesset and government by political party, 1949-81

Party	Knesset and date elected									
	I 1949	II 1951	III 1955	IV 1959	V 1961	VI 1965	VII 1969	VIII 1973	IX 1977	X 1981
Members of kibbutzim in the Knesset (MKs) by political party (total faction size in square brackets)										
Mapai/Labour	10 ^a [46]	8 ^b [45]	7 ^b [40]	6 ^b [47]	5 ^b [42]	5 ^b [45] ^b	7 ^{b,r,i} [56] ^k	7 ^{b,r} [51] ^k	3 ^{b,r} [32] ^k	4 ⁱ [47] ^k
Ahdut Ha'avoda	14 ^{c,d} [19]	9 ^{c,d} [15]	8 ^f [10]	4 ^f [7]	5 ^f [8]					
Mapam			7 ^g [9]	7 ^g [9]	7 ^g [9]	6 ^g [8]	4 ^s	4 ^s	2 ^s	4 ^s
Progressives ^b	—	—	1[5]	1[6]	1[17] ^m	1[5]	1[4]	1[4]	—	—
NRP ^a	1 [16] ⁿ	1[10]	1[11]	1[12]	1[12]	1[11]	1[12]	1[10]	1[12]	—
Pagi ⁱ		1[5]	1[6]	1[6]	1[2]	1[2]	1[6]	1[5]	1[1]	—
Rafi ⁱ	—	—	—	—	—	1 ^b [10]	—	—	—	—
Democratic Movement	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1 ^f [7]	—
Hat'hiya	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1[3] ^j
Summary statistics										
Total kibbutz MKs	26	19	25	20	20	19	14	14	8	9
Kibbutz MKs as % of total MKs	21.7	15.8	20.8	16.7	16.7	16.7	11.7	11.7	6.7	7.5
Kibbutz population as % of total population	6.3	4.8	4.8	4.2	3.9	3.5	3.4	3.5	3.3	3.4

Over-representation of kibbutz members in the Knesset (%)	344	329	433	398	428	429	344	334	203	244
Kibbutz members in government (size of government in square brackets)	—	1[12]	6[16]	4[16]	3[13]	4[18]	5[24]	5[19]	—	—
		1[16]			2[15]	6[21]	5[17]	4[16]		
					2[16]	5[18]		4[19]		
					3[16]					

Source: *Israel Government Yearbook* for relevant years.

Notes

Progressives = pro-Histadrut faction of General Zionists; **NRP** = National Religious Party; **Pagi** = Poalei Agudat Israel (extreme Orthodox party); **Rafi** = party formed by Ben-Gurion when he left Mapai after the Lavon affair; **Democratic Movement** = short-lived centrist party led by Yig'al Yadin; **Hat'hiya** = a small party advocating retention of all the occupied territories.

^a From Kibbutz Me'uhad kibbutzim (Mapai minority)

^b From Ihud kibbutzim

^c From Kibbutz Me'uhad and Kibbutz Artzi kibbutzim

^d From 1948 to 1954 Ahdut Ha'avoda and Hashomer Hatzair formed a united party known as Mapam.

^e From Kibbutz Dati kibbutzim

^f From Kibbutz Me'uhad kibbutzim

^g From Kibbutz Artzi kibbutzim

^h In 1965 Mapai and Ahdut Ha'avoda formed a single unit ('alignment') for electoral purposes while remaining otherwise separate entities.

ⁱ From 1969 onwards Mapai, Ahdut Ha'avoda, and Rafi were united as the Labour Party.

^j From UKM kibbutzim

^k From 1969 onwards the Labour Party and Mapam formed a single unit ('alignment') for electoral purposes, while remaining otherwise separate entities.

^l From kibbutzim of Poalei Agudat Israel. In all but the fifth and sixth Knesset Pagi was part of an electoral bloc of extreme Orthodox parties.

^m In 1961 the Progressive Party was merged with the General Zionists in the Liberal Party. From 1965 it was again independent, under the name of the Independent Liberal Party.

ⁿ In 1949 both the National Religious Party and Pagi were part of an electoral bloc combining the main religious parties.

over-representation even greater than that in the Knesset: some 19 per cent of the total. But kibbutz members served in the major decision-making posts (prime minister, deputy prime minister, defence and finance minister) for only a quarter of this time. Only Allon and Galili can be said to have been major political figures in this sense. Typical ministerial positions of kibbutz members were in agriculture, education, health, or transport. A typical non-ministerial function was that of party secretary at a period of inner tension between competing factions: a status of honest broker rather than policy-maker.⁵⁹

Thus there were two main patterns of kibbutz activity in politics. Representatives of the kibbutz movements in the parties, the government, and the Histadrut served as an interest group for their own economic sector, believing firmly that its interests were identical with those of the country as a whole.⁶⁰ In other matters, their function was largely that of service to the country and, in the narrow political sense, to the Mapai establishment: in the case of the Ihud, through faith in and ideological identification with that leadership; in the case of Mapam and Ahdut Ha'avoda, through electoral weakness, and inability to wield more than marginal influence on the policies of Mapai.⁶¹ Only the Kibbutz Me'uhad, acting according to its traditional principle of providing active leadership within a mass party, transcended the limits of these models, in the persons of Allon, Galili, and Ben-Aharon. It is one of the ironies of history that Allon and Galili reached the peak of their effectiveness under Golda Meir, an autocratic and inflexible prime minister. Historical research has not yet shown how much real power they enjoyed, but it seems unlikely that they did much more than buttress the policies she decided to follow.

THE RELIGIOUS KIBBUTZIM

The major religious kibbutz movement (Kibbutz Dati) was very badly damaged by the War of Independence, and the destruction of the Etzion

⁵⁹ For example: Giora Josephthal at the time of the Lavon affair; Aharon Yadlin during the premiership of Golda Meir; Meir Zarmi during the competition between Rabin and Peres for the leadership of the Labour Party. These are the examples which come closest to the concept of the kibbutz member as fulfilling a function similar to that of the 'country gentleman' in British politics: a person of independent means, who can use his talents and judgement for the good of the country (Naphtali, 'The Kibbutz'). In general, however, kibbutz politicians complied with the accepted party line, because too independent a stance could jeopardize their own careers and their chances of advancing the interests of their movements.

⁶⁰ Medding, *Mapai in Israel*, 26-7, 29.

⁶¹ For a more detailed analysis, see Near, 'The Kibbutz and Social Change', 196-8.

bloc. None the less, it continued to grow after 1948, in ways parallel to the major kibbutz movements. It co-operated with the Ihud in many matters and became, in effect, part of its economic system, while retaining cultural, religious, and political autonomy.

The Kibbutz Dati was particularly successful in two respects: in the retention of its children as adult members, and in the economic sphere. After the Six-Day War it re-founded three kibbutzim in the Etzion bloc, and established four new settlements in other areas. Politically, it formed a dovish faction within the National Religious Party, but this stance was gradually eroded from within and without. From within, many of its members came to favour the policies and actions of Gush Emunim, a movement which justified settlement in all parts of the occupied territories on religious grounds, and organized such settlement—until 1977, often in defiance of government policy. This trend was strengthened by the educational policy of the Kibbutz Dati's youth movement, B'nei Akiva, which was very deeply influenced by Gush Emunim. Externally, its political power was seriously reduced by changes in the ideology of the National Religious Party, which gradually came under the control of a hawkish majority influenced by the messianic tendencies which became current in religious circles in the wake of the Six-Day War. In the religious sector, as in others, the ethnic composition of the kibbutz marked it off from the Sephardi element which was playing an increasingly prominent role in outside society.

In religious matters, the Kibbutz Dati was subject to many of the forces at work in Israeli society as a whole. During the 1970s there was a distinct trend towards accepting standards set by the extreme Orthodox groups. Questions such as the permissibility of mixed bathing in the kibbutz pool, the place of women in the government of the kibbutz, and methods of observing the sabbatical year,⁶² were the subject of heated discussion, and were quite frequently decided according to criteria which had been rejected by the great majority in the Kibbutz Dati twenty years earlier.⁶³

At the other end of the spectrum, during the 1970s the Ihud made great efforts to extend its influence among the Jews of the Western world. One result of this was the formation of an educational alliance with a

⁶² The biblical injunction to let the land lie fallow every seven years.

⁶³ A wide variety of questions concerned with the application of stringently Orthodox principles to kibbutz life is discussed in *The Kibbutz in the Halacha*. Though its underlying principles, and most of the contributors, belong or are close to the ultra-Orthodox kibbutzim of Poalei Agudat Israel, some of the practices it advocates have also been adopted in the less extreme kibbutzim of the Kibbutz Dati.

number of independent youth movements in North America—Young Judea, and the Reform and Conservative youth movements—which also led to political alliances within the Zionist movement. Ketura, the first kibbutz of graduates of Young Judea, was founded in 1973, and Yahel, affiliated to the Reform Synagogue youth movement in the United States, was established towards the end of 1976.

THE KIBBUTZ IN ISRAELI SOCIETY

The Youth Movements

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s the pioneering youth movements in Israel and the Diaspora continued to be the main source of recruitment for the kibbutz, with the exception of the kibbutz-born generation. Their educational activities and approaches changed little with the establishment of the state: they still saw their main objective as education to membership of the kibbutz, with the help of the Nahal. But during the 1960s the proportion of movement graduates joining the Nahal decreased, and greater numbers left the kibbutz after their release from the army. This change in proportion led to changes in the perception of the tasks of the movements: the interpretation of 'good citizenship' as settlement in the kibbutz, which had been common ground to all the pioneering youth movements since the 1940s, was now reversed: recruitment to the kibbutz was still prominent among their aims, but the youth movements' educational effect on those who failed to reach the Nahal, or returned to town after a period in the kibbutz, was now seen as one of the kibbutz movements' most important contributions to society at large.

To a great extent, this change was more apparent than real. Before 1948 almost all the pioneering youth movements had recruited their members from the middle and upper classes of the Yishuv, whether those classes are characterized by wealth or by their position in relation to the centre of political power, the labour movement. Those who actually reached the Palmach and the kibbutz were a very small minority. For the great majority the youth movement was both a convenient framework within which to cope with the troublesome period of adolescence and a means of socialization. The most active and convinced members joined kibbutzim, or became active in political life in accordance with the beliefs and values they acquired in the movement; and these were the beliefs and values of what became the privileged sections of Israeli society.

Virtually the same words can be used of the situation in the 1970s. Almost all the youth movements, from the Scouts to Hashomer Hatzair, recruited mainly from the Ashkenazi middle and upper class, among children whose parents were themselves youth movement graduates. The general educational system had undergone a thoroughgoing reform aimed at the promotion of social equality by ensuring that all schools contained a mixture of ethnic and economic groups. Against this background, a widely based sociological study showed that the youth movements fulfilled the undeclared social function of 'a pocket of élitist education'. The more active members acquired a social and political ideology which they retained in later life, and a minority among them joined the kibbutz movements. But for the great majority, despite its declared intentions of education for good citizenship and a socialist world-view, the youth movement was little more than an easy path to assimilation into adult society. In their pre-state form the youth movements had also been élitist, but they had aimed to produce a serving élite, whether in the kibbutz or outside it. In the 1970s they still attempted to fulfil this function, and expended a great deal of money and talented manpower to this end. But their hidden agenda—and this is even more true of subsequent years—was recruitment to the new Israeli élite, an élite based on privilege and ethnicity, though in many cases paying lip-service to social democratic ideology.⁶⁴

The major exception to this trend was the Noar Oved, which since the 1930s had worked among working-class youth, fulfilling trade union and educational functions as well as recruiting to the kibbutz. Its 'educational division' was similar to those of the other movements, and educated primarily for kibbutz membership. Following the split in Mapai it narrowly avoided a similar political division, and from 1945 it worked in two separate sections, one connected to Mapai and one to Mapam, though both were still formally part of one movement. During the period of mass immigration in the early 1950s, the Mapai element organized what came to be known as the 'trade section', in the immigrant camps and *ma'abarot*, relying to a great extent on paid youth leaders, while the Mapam section continued with the traditional policy of working only with leaders from the kibbutz movement. The trade section expanded rapidly, doing a great variety of educational work with new immigrants as well as giving them trade union protection. Eventually this section, too, began to organize Nahal groups (at their peak, between 1968 and 1970, there were thirty-two of these).

⁶⁴ Shapira *et al.*, *Blue Shirt and White Collar*.

In 1954, when inter-party rivalry had died down, the two parts of the educational section united, together with the Mapai-oriented Tnua Me'uhedet, to form the Noar Ha'oved Vehalomed (Working and Student Youth), which continued to work in two sections: the trade section, which gave educational and trade union services to tens of thousands of working youths and girls, and the educational section, which worked with high-school youth. Like the other movements, the educational section tended to recruit from among the Ashkenazi middle-class population, and its connection with the Nahal and the kibbutz underwent a similar decline. The trade section, in addition to its other functions, also promoted recruitment to the kibbutz, but its Nahal groups had a rather bad record of leaving soon after their military service.⁶⁵

Ethnicity and Politics

Despite some setbacks, the years from 1968 to 1977 were a period of prosperity for Israeli society. Productivity increased, as did agricultural and industrial exports. At the same time, the influx of workers from the occupied territories enabled many of the underprivileged groups in the Israeli population to improve their social and economic standing, and become more aware of their relative deprivation. The Sephardi-Ashkenazi split moved to the centre of public consciousness, and became an increasingly important element in political development.⁶⁶

The kibbutzim grew aware of this situation only gradually. One reaction was to increase the number of members working as teachers, social workers, youth leaders, and the like in the neighbouring development towns. From 1965, many young people devoted a 'year of service' before the army to various forms of social and educational work with underprivileged young people. But this was widely seen as a form of *noblesse oblige*, whereby the privileged class paid a sop to its moral and political conscience. Moreover, the contrast between the increasing prosperity of the kibbutzim, based on their economic success, and the comparative poverty of the development towns was most striking. It was exacerbated by the fact that in many areas the kibbutz members had become part of the employing class—either directly in the factories located on the kibbutzim, or indirectly, as owners and managers of the regional enterprises. The fact that these class differences were paralleled by ethnic differences made the divisions even more marked, and increased both sides'

⁶⁵ Hakhilili, *Invitation to a Talk*, 61-5, 84-9; Sucher, *The 'New Yishuv'*.

⁶⁶ See e.g. Ben-Raphael, *Ethnicity*.

consciousness of the basic condition of social inequality. This was emphasized by the position of kibbutz-born soldiers in the armed forces. Though widely admired for their courage and qualities of leadership, they tended to keep themselves to themselves, and form an aristocratic élite which aroused ambivalent or hostile emotions. In public opinion polls Israeli Sephardim of the first and second generation expressed less sympathy towards the kibbutz than did Ashkenazim, and this phenomenon was more marked in the younger respondents. Kibbutz members who engaged in social and educational work in neighbouring development towns were highly regarded, but their intervention was often resented as paternalistic.⁶⁷

These differences were also expressed in social and political terms, through contrasting forms of cultural and religious expression and in differences between the dominant attitudes in both groups to party groupings and issues of policy. However hawkish the Kibbutz Me'uhad was in comparison with the Kibbutz Artzi, both were dovish in comparison with the policies of the Likud and the views of its supporters among the underprivileged. All these factors made for feelings of suspicion and hostility, which were strengthened when the kibbutz movements gave considerable logistic support to the Labour alignment in the 1977 elections.⁶⁸

The kibbutz movements were exceedingly sensitive to the charge of being a privileged minority. They made efforts to correct the Ashkenazi make-up of the kibbutzim by educating groups of Youth Aliya, most of them of Sephardi origin, by ensuring that their youth movements, and the Nahal groups formed by their graduates, should be of mixed ethnic origin, and by a widespread—though indecisive—debate about how to solve the social problems arising from the existence of the regional enterprises. Moreover, there was a slow but perceptible tendency to increase the proportion of Sephardim by intermarriage with the kibbutz-born members. None the less, at the end of the 1970s the ethnic make-up of the kibbutz movement was still about 90 per cent Ashkenazi. The image of the kibbutz as part of the Ashkenazi establishment was very close to the truth.

⁶⁷ Leviatan, *Ethnicity; Pavin, With Each Other?* In a sophisticated statistical analysis of the opinion poll results, Leviatan shows that the main factor making for hostility was lack of contact with kibbutz members rather than ethnicity or class as such. In practice, however, Sephardim had less contact with the kibbutzim, and fewer of them joined the kibbutz-connected youth movements.

⁶⁸ Pavin, *The Political Factor*.

The Dilemmas of Prosperity: Social Developments, 1954-1977

THE kibbutz movement grew steadily but moderately in these two decades: both the total population and the average size of the kibbutzim increased by some 20 per cent over the period. More important than this, however, was the growing complexity both of the movements and of each individual community. By the beginning of the 1960s even the smallest kibbutz no longer aimed at the simple unitary structure of the 'intimate' *kvutzot* of the early years, and the veteran *kvutzot* themselves had long ago adopted institutions such as committees, formal votes, and elected office-holders. There was a distinct tendency for the governing bodies of the kibbutzim to be deeply influenced, if not dominated, by an inner circle of leaders and managers—a trend which was strengthened by modernization and specialization in economic and cultural matters.

This process was felt at the level of the kibbutz movements as well as in the individual kibbutzim. Each movement maintained a network of central departments and committees designed to aid the individual kibbutzim, represent the movement *vis-à-vis* the central institutions of the state and the Histadrut, and provide guidance and leadership.¹ The movements' basic needs were similar. By 1955 each had departments for recruitment and absorption of new members, security (contact with the IDF, and assistance to kibbutz members in the forces), education, contacts with the youth movements, and a number of economic departments which provided advice and planning facilities as well as organizing financial assistance on the basis of mutual aid. Over the years these departments were strengthened, often by the addition of hired officials, and the scope of the central institutions' activities greatly broadened. Among other services, they gave help and advice on a wide variety of cultural pursuits, from chess and walking tours to photography and graphic arts; organized the recruiting, reception, and distribution of volunteer workers from abroad; and gave technical advice on physical planning, architecture, and

¹ This section is mainly based on Kibbutz Artzi, *From Conference to Conference, Goal and Deed*, vol. ii, and *From Council to Council*; Ihud, *Aims and Deeds* and *Two Years*; Kibbutz Me'uhad, *1950 to 1954* and *1966 to 1976*; and on the author's personal knowledge.

building. The Kibbutz Artzi set up an import-export agency. There were special departments to deal with social problems, which attempted to define norms for the whole of the movement: under their aegis the 'singles' bureaux', for discreet matchmaking, were set up. Each of the movements had its own ideological and teachers' seminars, and the Kibbutz Artzi and the Kibbutz Me'uhad both owned publishing houses. The needs of the kibbutzim had stimulated the formation of a complex bureaucracy, at whose head was a central committee, elected at the movements' conferences. In most cases, however, the administrative machinery was recruited from the kibbutzim by a process of co-optation.

Although each movement jealously guarded its own independence and interests, once the heated rivalries of the 1950s had moderated they began to co-operate to an increasing degree. This tendency was formalized in 1963, with the renewal of the Federation of Kibbutz Movements (Brit Hatnua Hakibbutzit), a framework for combined action which had been formed at the height of the unification controversy before the Second World War,² but since become moribund. This body functioned only in areas on which there was unanimity between the movements, and their number grew greater with the years. In the economic sphere, it gradually took over the representation of the kibbutz movements in negotiations with the government and the Histadrut, and played a vital role in backing bodies such as the Federation of Kibbutz Industry. Its educational activities included training courses for educators at many levels, and it assumed the formal ownership of two teachers' training colleges. It had a very active gerontological department, and a wide range of cultural activities, including the Kibbutz Chamber Orchestra, the Kibbutz Dance Troupe, and a centre for fostering, disseminating, and documenting ways of celebrating the festivals. Thus, although many political, ideological, and organizational differences still separated the movements, on the functional level they were sufficiently similar to conduct very many joint activities.

The plans and requirements of the movement bureaucracy usually outran its ability to recruit sufficient workers from the kibbutzim, and special committees were created to adjudicate in the frequent disputes on this issue; towards the end of the period the Kibbutz Me'uhad was able to meet only about half of its manpower requirements, and the Ihud and the Kibbutz Artzi some 80 per cent. Although in principle the 'activists', or 'movement workers', as they were called, were subject to the principle of rotation of office-bearers,

² See *KM* i. 346-50.

many stayed in office for long periods and became professional officials, living in town and returning to their kibbutzim twice a week. Among these were the political leaders of the movements, and those who managed their central economic and financial institutions. The 'iron law of bureaucracy' applied to kibbutzim and kibbutz movements as to other forms of organization. But it was modified by the special conditions of kibbutz society: managerial posts in the kibbutz community conferred few material benefits, a great deal of work, much of it at the cost of time spent with the family, and constant exposure to criticism; and at the national level the long-term members of the bureaucracy, while often able to enjoy many of the benefits of town life, frequently paid a heavy price of separation from their family and their own community.

Overall, both the kibbutz movements and the individual kibbutzim became more streamlined during this period, and contributed a great deal to the efficiency and well-being of community and individual alike. But they were also increasingly centralized and institutionalized—and, therefore, risked the spread of feelings of alienation among their members. This process took place against the background of deep social changes in the kibbutz community, a great many of which could not be altered by acts of will.

DEMOGRAPHY AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Between 1955 and 1977 the population of the kibbutzim grew from 77,800 to 101,600. In all but the last two years of this period, however, more members left than joined—an average 'negative migratory balance' of more than 700 members each year. The increase in total population was the result of the high birthrate, which was above the average of that of the Jewish population of Israel:³ the younger generation of the kibbutzim was now a vital component of the kibbutz community. Those born in the kibbutz had first played a significant role in history during the War of Independence, but it was only in the late 1950s, as children born in the early years of the tower and stockade settlements began to reach maturity, that they became a quantitative force. At the other end of the age scale, in the few kibbutzim founded in the 1920s the veteran members were approaching the age of retirement in the 1950s, and a few had already reached it.

³ Maron, *Kibbutz Movement*, 27.

These changes in the demographic structure of the kibbutz movements brought with them the promise of a permanently settled 'organic' kibbutz community, no longer dependent on the absorption of new members for its very existence. As long ago as 1923 Yitzhak Tabenkin had declared: 'When people live, are born, grow up and die in the kibbutz, it will be able to continue to exist out of inertia.'⁴ By the mid-1960s a substantial number of kibbutzim had been transformed into multi-generational communities. But this development, welcome in itself, raised questions which had not been apparent in previous periods, when kibbutz society was relatively homogeneous.

The Younger Generation

In the periodicals produced by the kibbutz movements there had been no lack of discussion of the younger generation from a very early stage.⁵ Until the 1960s, however, the writers had in the main been educators or ideologists, who viewed kibbutz-born children as objects of education: as the accepted phrase had it, 'the successor generation'.⁶ This approach assumed that when the children of the kibbutz had sufficiently absorbed the values of their elders they would be assimilated into the kibbutz community and play their part in its development by their parents' side. The problems of the younger generation would no doubt continue to trouble educators, but they would have been overcome by the time the children joined the adult community.

Until the mid-1960s there seemed to be a good deal of truth in this assumption. At the end of each school year all the high-school graduates were received into membership of the kibbutz in an impressive ceremony. They maintained their contact with parents and community while they were in the army and, in most cases, during an extra year of service spent in a young and struggling kibbutz or in youth leadership. Nearly all of them—almost 90 per cent by 1960—then returned home, to be absorbed into the life and work of the kibbutz.⁷ Two early surveys show

⁴ Katznelson, *The Kvutza*, 174. Stanley Maron contends that this was in fact the case from the 1970s onwards: Maron, *Communal Household*.

⁵ e.g. Maletz, 'On Ourselves and on Our Children'; id., 'On Our Children Again'; and a series of responses to the latter, all of which appeared in *Mibifnim* (Dec. 1933), 47–56; Rivkai, 'What about Us?'. ⁶ See e.g. Messinger, *Successor Generation*.

⁷ Exact figures for this period are hard to come by. According to an estimate made in 1981, 8% of the graduates of the high schools of the Kibbutz Artzi left between 1953 and 1960. Figures from a later period show the proportion in the other movements to be higher—in the Ihud it was 12%. Weber and Grossman, *Young People*, 7; Rosner *et al.*, *The Second Generation*, 350.

that the range of positions they occupied in the economic system was proportionately similar to those filled by the older generation, and they were beginning to take responsibility for work branches, and even for key managerial roles in the community.⁸

During the 1960s expressions such as 'the revolt of youth' and 'the generation gap', which had been catch-phrases of the Zionist youth movements for forty years, became common currency throughout the Western world. It was perhaps inevitable that in the circumstances these concepts should be applied to intergenerational relations in the kibbutz. But the reality which they represented was different from that in France or the United States. The generations lived in close proximity, and worked together in harmony. There was little struggle for power in the ordinary sense; indeed, in many cases the veterans were only too eager to hand over the burdens of responsibility which had been theirs for three or four decades.⁹ But there were differences of mentality and of world-view which often led to tension between the generations.

One of the first written expressions of such tension was an article by a kibbutz-born member of Kibbutz Afikim, Omri Lulav, entitled 'You, as against Us'. He accused the first generation of rigidity and fanaticism in defence of their values, and of seeing an imaginary conflict between those values and human needs and desires. In concrete terms, he listed a number of 'natural and positive' developments in kibbutz life which the founding generation decried as retrograde steps: among others, the strengthening of the nuclear family, the 'personal budget',¹⁰ and the provision of a kitchenette in family apartments. It was natural for some young people to leave the kibbutz, he wrote, and those who did should not be condemned as 'traitors'.

Your understandable and sincere concern for the future of the kibbutz has led you to lose your faith in us. . . . You grant us the right to choose, but only in theory; for choice involves the possibility of saying 'No', including the possibility of leaving the kibbutz; and this, of course is inconceivable to you. . . .

⁸ Lechtman, 'Work Branches'; Dudu, *Survey*, 23, 33.

⁹ A survey of twelve representative veteran kibbutzim shows that by 1960 kibbutz-born men and women had filled one or more of the central administrative posts (secretary, farm manager, or treasurer) in four of them, and that by the mid-1960s this was common practice. In general, the younger generation began to take on these tasks between thirty-five and forty years from the foundation of the kibbutz; they were themselves, therefore, under 40 years old, while their parents' ages averaged 55 to 60. In the smaller *kvutzot*, where the choice was more limited, the process was much faster, and began between twenty and twenty-four years from the foundation of the kibbutz. (Source: author's questionnaire to kibbutz archivists, 1993.)

¹⁰ See below on systems of consumption.

You tell us that our weakness stems from the fact that we love our home and no more, that our attitude to the kibbutz is based on emotion rather than reason. And I reply that that is why our approach is preferable to yours. Yes, we love our home and the people in it. But no less—however strange or surprising this may seem to you—we love the fact that we are equals, not in trivial matters, but in our right to live free and full lives, in which each of us is appreciated not because of his possessions or his function in society, but because of his personality. We love communal life, and the small group, not because we are told [to live like that], but as a vital part of day-to-day life. . . . We are concerned with ourselves, introverted, even short-sighted. . . . We stammer our solutions; they are full of rows of dots. Our sentences never end in exclamation-marks [as yours do].

The article ends with the following passage:

True, we are not imbued with the same spirit of mission which accompanied your deeds in the early days.

True, our days are made up of small deeds, and the evenings do not raise us to peaks of enthusiasm, as yours did in the past.

True, we do not appreciate equality and community in the way you did, just as we do not know how to appreciate satiety—for we have never been hungry.

We simply love our way of life.

And to those doubters who say 'You have no conception of values, only the habit of love, and that cannot preserve [the kibbutz] for ever', we reply: 'The love of life is the love of man. If there is no hope for them, there is no point in hoping. Let us not forget that equality and community and all they imply are only means, whereas the love of man and the yearning for life are the end.'¹¹

The place of publication of this article is no less significant than its title and contents. It appeared in a journal entitled *Shdemot* (Fields), published by the youth department of the Ihud. Within three years of its first appearance in 1960 *Shdemot*, under the vigorous editorship of Avraham Shapira of kibbutz Yizre'el, had developed from a rather provincial educational periodical to a forum of expression for the younger generation of the Ihud—both those born on the kibbutz and their contemporaries who had joined through the youth movements. Strongly influenced by Martin Buber and others close to his philosophy, Shapira's policy was to promote self-expression, even if this came into conflict with the accepted views and principles of the kibbutz movements' establishment. Thus many young kibbutz intellectuals had a forum for their views, one which also served to crystallize those views in a direction close to that of Buber's humanistic socialism.

The intellectuals who found their expression in *Shdemot* were

¹¹ Lulav, 'You, as against Us'.

undoubtedly a small minority. But their ideas would never have gained wide currency had they not stemmed from deeply felt attitudes among the younger generation. Their reaction against the toughness and single-mindedness of the founding fathers derived in the main from their different experience of kibbutz life. The founders had devoted their lives to building a new society, in rebellion against the values of the capitalist world in which they had grown up. Had they not been inflexible in their devotion to their ideals, and physically and mentally tough, it is doubtful whether the kibbutz would have survived its uncertain beginnings and thirty years of military struggle. For their sons and daughters, however, the kibbutz was a living community whose existence was not in doubt—particularly in the mid-1960s, when economic prosperity was just round the corner. But they rebelled against many of the restrictions which their parents saw as essential conditions for the very existence of kibbutz society.

In fact, however, despite the apparent divergence from the older generation, most of these young people's demands could be justified by one version of kibbutz ideology or another. The concept of the kibbutz as a home was, after all, the direct outcome of the aspirations and labour of the founding generation, and its members were also attached emotionally, as well as ideologically, to their special plot of land and their own community. In their protests against excessive institutionalization and the emphasis on communal values and discipline which had been an essential part of the system in earlier, more stressful, periods, the kibbutz-born generation found many allies among their parents—both those who pressed for a loosening of the rules, and others who brought about gradual change by circumventing them in practice.¹²

None the less, it was hard for these young people to rebel wholeheartedly against those whom they saw, with some justification, as a generation of giants. Their revolt was hesitant and ambivalent, and it was made more so by the underpitched and halting style which they often adopted. The figures quoted above show that the younger generation was absorbed into the economic system without very much difficulty, and began to take a leading place in the social organization of the kibbutz; and in most cases this was accompanied by accommodation to accepted social norms—not an unusual outcome of youthful revolt the world over.

These processes took place quietly during the late 1950s and early 1960s, and were discussed within each kibbutz and in the kibbutz move-

¹² For a similar analysis, see Cohen and Rosner, 'Relations between Generations'.

ments, mainly in an educational context. As we have seen, the existence of a generation with very special characteristics was brought to public notice both within the kibbutz movement and far beyond it by the Six-Day War and its aftermath. From then on the public debate took on a different dimension: the young people themselves participated with increasing forcefulness as their weight in the kibbutz community grew. By 1974 more than 30 per cent of the permanent adult members of the Ihud were kibbutz-born, and a further 6 per cent graduates of groups of Youth Aliya. In 1977 the corresponding figures for the Kibbutz Artzi were 34 per cent and 10 per cent.¹³

It seemed, therefore, that the kibbutz community might well be advancing to the point where it could survive 'by inertia': that is to say, without recruiting from outside the circle of its own members and their children and grandchildren. In fact, however, this ideal was still far from realization. Natural increase was not sufficient to maintain the kibbutz movement at a constant size: the average number of children per couple in 1961 was 1.6; and although this figure rose gradually until it reached 2.73 in 1983,¹⁴ it was clear by then that kibbutz-born children were leaving home in numbers which became ever more disturbing. By 1959 about 18 per cent of the 1,221 men and women who had completed their army service had left the kibbutz, and in the following year the proportion increased to 23.8 per cent. Over the coming years these numbers grew steadily in all the movements. Between 1970 and 1977 3,940 kibbutz-born adults became members of kibbutzim of the Kibbutz Artzi, and 2,105—more than 53 per cent—subsequently left.¹⁵

These statistics were not known to most kibbutz members; indeed, for most of this period the kibbutz movements were rather reluctant to publish such figures—partly because of the real difficulty in compiling accurate statistics, and partly because of their fear of sowing despair if the extent of this 'natural' attrition were widely known. But every kibbutz member knew of the facts in his own community, and was well aware that the problem was a serious one. From the early 1970s there

¹³ Ihud, *Statistical Distributions, 1974*, 1; Kibbutz Artzi, *Population Census, 1977*, 29. Because of the sporadic character of statistical publications in the kibbutz movement it is not always possible to give exact parallels in specific years. There is no corresponding analysis for the Kibbutz Me'uhad, but it may be assumed that the proportions were not very different.

¹⁴ Orchan, *Changes in Fertility Rates*, 18.

¹⁵ 1959–60: Dudu, *Survey*, 7–8, 15; Kibbutz Artzi: Orchan, *Demographic Trends in the Kibbutz Artzi*, 13. Here again there are no exact figures for the other movements over an equivalent period, but the proportions were probably about the same.

was a spate of articles in the movement press dealing with subjects such as intergenerational relations, social and economic absorption of the young, and the reasons for their leaving—though none added much to those revealed in a survey made as early as 1959: unwillingness or inability to adapt to kibbutz life, and marriage to a partner who refused to do so.¹⁶ Each of the kibbutz movements strengthened its department for youth affairs, which began to focus on the problems of adolescent kibbutz youth in addition to their traditional concerns for the youth movements and their graduates. Part of the same movement of thought led to the beginning of an extensive research project on the younger members of the kibbutz, based on those between the ages of 20 and 35 in 1968 and designed to reveal the motivation and characteristics of a whole generation. It was published in sections from 1971 onwards, and in book form in 1978. Its conclusions confirmed the instinctive judgements already widely mooted about the differences in mentality and world-view between the generations.¹⁷

All of this intellectual and educational activity did little to change the overall trend. And indeed it is doubtful whether anything substantial could have been done in the face of a number of historical factors in the context of which it took place.

Some of these have already been noted. The intergenerational tensions described so strikingly by Lulav and others were inherent in the relationships between two groups of people with very different physical, cultural, and psychological backgrounds, living in a close-knit community and forced to react simultaneously to rapidly changing situations. But they were reinforced by external circumstances. In the face of the crisis of faith described in Chapter 7 even the most devoted youngsters could scarcely believe in the mission of the kibbutz with the fanaticism of their elders. In the majority of the kibbutzim, those politically allied to Mapam, this fanaticism had been applied to political matters, and disillusionment with the Soviet Union led to a widespread scepticism towards ideology of any sort.

This scepticism chimed well with the spirit of the age, the time of the 'end of ideology' in the western world. And when the pace-setters of the younger generation of Europe and America reverted to ideological thinking, one aspect of their thought was well suited to the mindset of kibbutz-born youngsters. The Marxist shibboleths of the 1960s meant nothing to them: they felt them to be part of their parents' world. But they had been brought up to believe in the 'revolt of youth', and to

¹⁶ Dudu, *Survey*, 7–8.

¹⁷ Rosner *et al.*, *The Second Generation*.

practise the principles of self-determination and autonomous decision-making in the 'children's society' and the 'youth society'. They now applied these ideas to their own case, and formed a set of values significantly different from those of their parents. One central issue was the question of 'self-realization'. This term was brought to Palestine in the 1920s by graduates of the youth movements, who interpreted it to mean both that they were themselves putting into practice the principles they preached, and that by doing so they were fulfilling their potential to the utmost: it was, in effect, a declaration of identification with the ideals of Zionism and the kibbutz. The intellectuals among the kibbutz-born now began to talk of 'self-fulfilment' (*mimush atzmi*) rather than—indeed, in opposition to—'self-realization' (*hagshama atzmit*): they were interested in realizing their own potential, whether or not they were achieving national or social goals by doing so. Declarations to this effect led one of the leaders of the Ihud to ask whether the kibbutz-born generation was 'a generation of hippies'.¹⁸

The situation of Israel and the kibbutz in the 1960s and 1970s intensified these developments. After the Six-Day War, the belief that Israel's strength and the victory of 1967 were a guarantee of its peace and security for many years to come led to a sense of relaxation, from which the kibbutz movements were certainly not immune. As we have seen, the war also led to the arrival of a stream of voluntary workers, who became a major source of temporary manpower for all the movements. As a result, kibbutz youngsters in their teens and twenties came into direct contact with their contemporaries from all over the world, who had a more relaxed and permissive lifestyle. Many adopted the outsiders' style of dress and, very often, their philosophy of life.

All of these factors were intensified by the social development of Israel in the 1970s: the previously accepted ideals of socialism and a welfare state economy were gradually replaced by norms of individualism and capitalist development. Such ideas penetrated to the kibbutzim through the media, and reached the younger generation through their many contacts with the outside world when they were most impressionable, during their army service.

On balance, however, during the 1970s the younger generation was on the whole far from deserting the kibbutz and its values. The figures quoted above do not tell the whole story. They show the number who left because their partners refused to live in the kibbutz, but they ignore

¹⁸ Senta Josephtal, general secretary of the Ihud, quoted in Ufaz, 'Jewish Sources', 234.

those born outside the kibbutz who 'married in', and these certainly formed a substantial proportion of the 15 per cent of the Ihud's population who originated in Israeli or foreign towns.¹⁹ Moreover, the results of their revolt were not all negative. It led to the modification of some of the more restrictive aspects of kibbutz life, established during the puritanical pioneering period. And in certain respects they reinterpreted the principles of the kibbutz, adapting them to the new circumstances of the time. Their role in the IDF has already been mentioned. The contribution of the *Shdemot* group to kibbutz Judaism will be discussed in a later section. And in more than one instance they found new ways of applying their parents' social values to the new realities of Israeli society: in the early years of the state by volunteering to work in immigrant villages, and, from the mid-1960s, by devoting their extra year of service to voluntary work in underprivileged communities—in both cases, against the initial opposition of the movement authorities.²⁰ They had rebelled against the way their parents expressed their social values, but found new ways of expressing those very values in their own lives.

Absorption

Until 1939 new members were recruited almost entirely through the youth movements and Youth Aliya. Between 1945 and 1949 there was a change in this practice: Holocaust survivors, sometimes with purely formal connections with the youth movement, were accepted as a matter of course, and many ex-Palmach fighters joined their comrades in new or existing kibbutzim. As we have seen, during the period of mass immigration all the kibbutz movements also made efforts to absorb immigrant families, though with little success.

From 1949 onwards the 'kibbutz *ulpan*', in which new immigrants divided their days between work and the study of Hebrew, became an established institution, but the hopes which it originally aroused as a possible source of recruitment were only fulfilled in a few cases. A campaign organized in 1953-4 in conjunction with the Histadrut to recruit families from the towns of Israel was rather more successful, and resulted in the addition of about 400 families.²¹ A similar campaign was organized during the recession of 1966-7, with some success; but very

¹⁹ Ihud, *Statistical Distributions*, 1974.

²⁰ Habass, *Movement without a Name*; Raz, 'Children of the Kvutza', 160-1; id., 'Mobilizing the Second Generation'; No'a and Oded, 'The Eleventh Grade'; Fried, 'Idealism in a Development Town'.

²¹ Ihud, *From Conference to Conference*, 156; Kibbutz Me'uhad, *From 1960 to 1966*, 78-9.

few of those who joined a kibbutz as a result of economic distress stayed in it once the recession was over.²²

The growth in prosperity which began in 1967 coincided with an awakening of Zionist and pro-Israel emotions among many Diaspora Jews, particularly from Europe and the English-speaking countries. The Israeli government made special arrangements for their absorption, including family *ulpanim* and absorption centres. Three such centres were set up in kibbutzim, and each of the kibbutz movements expanded its absorption department and sent special emissaries to the Jewish communities of the West in order to encourage immigration. At the same time there was a noticeable increase in the number of Israeli families wishing to join kibbutzim in order to enjoy their quality of life and escape the stresses of urban living. Unlike those who joined during periods of economic distress, a high proportion of these remained in the kibbutz, and much effort was invested both at the national level and by the individual kibbutzim to ensure satisfactory selection and smooth absorption.²³ Throughout this period, too, all of the movements continued to recruit groups of graduates of the pioneering youth movements, from Israel and abroad, in the framework of the Nahal.

A statistical breakdown of the kibbutzim of the Ihud at the end of 1973 gives a detailed picture of the adult members of the movement at this time. Those who had joined since 1960 made up slightly more than half (9,000 out of 17,800). Of these, by far the largest group (46.5 per cent) were kibbutz-born, and 5.5 per cent had been kibbutz-educated in the framework of Youth Aliya and the like.²⁴ Youth movement graduates numbered 33.5 per cent of those who joined during these twelve years—10 per cent from abroad, the majority from Israel—but only about half of these went through the standard course of joining a Nahal group, while the remainder arrived as individuals. Individual recruitment of those without youth movement background accounted for almost 15 per cent, rather more than half of them from abroad.²⁵

²² The Ihud, which was rather more successful than the other movements in recruiting families from the towns, absorbed fewer than 500 between 1964 and 1968, and many of these left within a few years. Ihud, *Aims and Deeds*, 18–19; Kibbutz Artzi, *Between Conference and Conference*, 35–6.

²³ United Kibbutz Movement, *What There Is*, 52–4; Kibbutz Artzi, *From Conference to Conference*, 32.

²⁴ These figures do not distinguish between those who stayed in their own kibbutzim and those who moved to another kibbutz, though the statistical breakdown shows that there was considerable movement of this sort, particularly among Nahal graduates.

²⁵ Ihud, *Statistical Distributions*, 1974. Unfortunately, this analysis was something of

By the end of the 1970s the kibbutz community was much more diversified than it had ever been: in addition to the founding generation, with its background in the youth movements of Europe and Israel, there were the founders' sons and daughters, many of them with partners from a quite different background, side by side with families and youth movement graduates who had joined after varied life experience in Israeli and foreign towns. Each of these groups added something of its own cultural heritage to the already diversified tapestry of the kibbutz community.

Old Age

The founders of the kibbutz did not consider the question of ageing in any but the most general terms, if at all: the kibbutz was built by young men and women, and the tasks it took on itself—defence, physical labour, new settlement—were suited to the young. From the 1930s onwards many kibbutzim had a small number of ageing inhabitants, the parents of the members. But these were outside the central social framework, and their problems, of health and occupation, were usually dealt with on an individual basis. But from the early 1960s the number of members over the age of 60 in the veteran kibbutzim began to increase, and it was clear that a new process was already under way. By 1970 the proportion of people aged 65 and over in the kibbutz population was about 6 per cent. By 1978 it had reached about 14 per cent, and in some of the veteran kibbutzim as much as a third.²⁶

This process was not identical in every kibbutz. In quantitative terms, those which were worst affected were the small *kvutzot*, which until the Second World War had deliberately limited their numbers, and those which were unable to bridge the demographic gap between the first and second generations by the absorption of members of suitable age. In several cases this meant that by 1975 almost a third of the members were over the age of 65. Such a demographic structure intensified the psychological gap between the generations. It also laid a heavy burden on the

a flash in the pan, resulting from the unusual activity and skill of the staff of the Ihud's statistical department at this time; but there is no doubt that the proportions remained roughly similar over the next few years. There are no parallel figures for the other movements, but it is probable that they were less varied, since their absorption was mainly from the youth movements. Over the coming years their communities also became more diversified.

²⁶ These figures, which include all ages in the total population, and members' parents in the over-65s, are based on Atar, *On the Coming of Age*, 30, and on Leviatan, 'Successful Aging', 74-5. They are not absolutely accurate, because of discrepancies between the assessments of the different kibbutz movements, but the general trend is quite clear.

younger generation, who would have to provide economic support and other forms of care for a large proportion of the community which was no longer productive.

In many cases the founders of the kibbutz did not consider ageing to be a problem. Their work was at the centre of their lives, and they would continue to work to the best of their ability until they died in harness. The kibbutz was responsible for ensuring that problems of health were dealt with in the best way possible, and they would continue to play their part in the community, as they had all their lives.²⁷ A personal anecdote may illustrate this point. In about 1980 I conducted a trip to the Jordan valley with my students. Part of the programme was a discussion with one of the veteran members of Degania Aleph—a woman a little over 80 years of age. We arrived late, and she had already begun her half-day's work in the clothing store. When I suggested that in order to meet my students she could work half an hour less, she replied: 'How could I look my comrades in the face?' My students were very impressed.

This attitude was reflected in the activities of the kibbutz movements. The first article dealing with old age in the kibbutz appeared in 1951, when most of the veterans of the dozen settlements founded before 1923 were close to or beyond their sixtieth year. But the problem was first discussed in a formal framework only in 1960; and it was not until 1966 that the Federation of Kibbutz Movements created a department for older members.²⁸

Even so, some concessions had to be made to biological necessities. Regulations adopted by the Ihud in 1960, and subsequently by the other movements, provided for a gradual shortening of the working day from the standard eight or nine hours until it reached four at the age of 65.²⁹ At this very early stage the principle which informed the approach of all the kibbutz movements to this question was defined: 'The emphasis in this clause is not only the table [defining the number] of working-hours . . . but . . . the importance of old people's continuing to work in their regular place of employment.'³⁰ This emphasis on 'the right to work', which is a commonplace of modern gerontological thinking, has always characterized the approach of the kibbutz movements. But it can pose a

²⁷ Leviatan, *Work and Age*.

²⁸ Cana'ani, 'Age'; id., 'Discussion of Old Age'; and see Leviatan, 'Successful Aging', 75–8.

²⁹ These regulations have since been amended in detail. Reduction of hours on the grounds of age now begins for women at 50, and for men at 55, with a five-day week from the age of 60; from 70, work is considered a right rather than a duty. 'Proposal for Labour Regulations'; Atar, *On the Coming of Age*, 86–7. ³⁰ Altman, 'On the Work Regulations'.

number of difficult problems for the kibbutz system. Not all members can continue to work indefinitely in agricultural branches, even for a shortened working day. Individual solutions, such as the provision of special transport for a 73-year-old who insisted on working in the banana groves (a particularly arduous branch) after a heart attack, could not be applied to large numbers.³¹ It was fortunate that the increase in elderly members coincided roughly with the industrialization of the kibbutz: there were many less strenuous jobs in the industrial enterprises, and the transition to easier tasks was facilitated by the flexible organization of work, which enabled members to change their jobs with relative ease. But this by itself was not sufficient. A number of kibbutzim set up special factories or workshops to provide profitable employment for older people; others planned special departments or working stations in their factories for those with disabilities.³²

The opportunity to change one's employment was combined with the 'right to work' to avert the frequent occurrence of the 'retirement crisis' so well known in many Western societies. But ageing still presented a good many problems, many of which began to reach public consciousness only during the 1970s. The existence of extended families whose members lived in close proximity ensured that most of the old people had a nexus of family relationships which minimized problems of communication and saved them making irksome travel arrangements. On the other hand, the interaction between the generations in a relatively confined space led to tension, as the younger generation expressed unwillingness to sit with the old in the dining-room, or found their ways of thought and expression in committees or general meetings irrelevant, or even repugnant—a phenomenon which has been mitigated, but not eliminated, by a number of educational projects at primary and high-school level. The generation gap also expressed itself in cultural matters, in areas such as musical and artistic taste. As a result, several kibbutzim began to arrange special leisure-time activities for their older members. Housing was also often a source of problems and conflicts. The question of whether to house old people in special districts of their own, or to disperse them throughout the kibbutz in order to encourage their interaction with other generations, occupied planning committees in many kibbutzim, and there was no clear direction from any of the movements. The problem was intensified during the 1970s, when many kibbutzim began to accommodate young children with their families. This necessi-

³¹ Brenner and Golomb, 'Kibbutz Industry'.

³² *Ibid.* 96–101.

tated the building of bigger and more modern apartments, while the older generation, whose children had long since left home, stayed in houses of a much lower standard which it was often hard to adapt to their special needs.³³ It took time—sometimes as much as a decade—for this problem to be recognized, and an attempt made to satisfy the requirements of the older generation.

Now, too, attention had to be paid to the existence of a growing number of physically limited people, some needing constant care and specialized gerontological attention. Kupat Holim, the Histadrut health-care system, was responsible for clinical treatment. But there were many cases in which other aspects of the care of the old constituted a heavy burden on the economic resources of a kibbutz, and particularly on its strained manpower. Occasionally, veteran kibbutzim were unable to deal with the problem with their own resources, and some of the most distinguished founders of the kibbutz movement ended their days in old people's institutions, far from their own homes and families. These occurrences sparked off a wide-ranging debate on the way to ensure that, as far as possible, every kibbutz member should end his days with dignity in his own community. One of the results was the establishment of special training courses for geriatric workers, organized by the Federation of Kibbutz Movements; another was the construction of centres for specialized medical care and for recreational activities within the kibbutz and on a regional basis.³⁴

This period therefore witnessed the appearance of ageing in the kibbutz as an important social problem, and the beginning of a search for solutions. In 1977 a male kibbutz member aged 60 could expect to live another nineteen years and three months, and a woman three years more than that.³⁵ It was clear, therefore, that the question would be of increasing importance in the coming years.

CULTURE

The Yearly Cycle

In Volume I, I described the gradual introduction into the cultural life of the kibbutzim of many traditional Jewish forms, including secularized versions of the religious ceremonies for each festival, and the *kabbalat shabbat*.³⁶ Quoting a critical article which referred to 'the devaluation of

³³ Atar, *On the Coming of Age*, ch. 9.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, ch. 11.

³⁵ Leviatan *et al.*, *Life Expectancy*.

³⁶ See *KM* i. 373–5.

the Sabbath rest', I summed up the generally accepted attitude in the secular kibbutz by saying that, although each individual had the right to a free day every week, the community as a whole could scarcely be said to be resting every Saturday.

It was the Orthodox kibbutzim which provided a model for changing this state of affairs, thus bringing about a qualitative change in the way of life of every kibbutz member. From their very first days the religious kibbutzim made technical arrangements to keep work on Sabbath and festivals to an absolute minimum: the burden of essential tasks such as the care of children and livestock was spread among the whole of the community by a rota system, even if the work was thereby performed less expertly. By the end of the 1950s this pattern had been copied by the rest of the kibbutz movement, and the communal Sabbath became, as it remains, the norm in virtually every kibbutz.

This very down-to-earth expression of one of the central values of Jewish tradition exemplifies a trend often described by its advocates as a 'return to the sources'. Prominent among these were the *Shdemot* circle, and a small group of people involved in cultural activities in the kibbutz movements.

One aspect of the *Shdemot* group's rebellion against the founding generation was the belief that, in their reaction against the overwhelming influence of rabbinical Judaism on the Jewish people, their fathers had gone too far: in Omri Lulav's words, that they had replaced God by the values of the kibbutz. Many of them were deeply influenced by such thinkers as Martin Buber, Gershom Scholem, and group of Israeli intellectuals who advocated a spiritual (and non-Orthodox) interpretation of Jewish thought and tradition.³⁷ They attempted to change a number of aspects of kibbutz culture: for instance, to revise the overwhelming emphasis on the Bible and the biblical period which had become accepted in the kibbutz movement as elsewhere in Israel, and to learn as well from the cultural creation of the Diaspora, from the Talmud to modern times. Many of the members of these groups still have considerable influence on matters of education and culture through such institutions as the cultural department of the Federation of Kibbutz Movements, and the Jewish studies programme in the Oranim College of Education.³⁸

³⁷ e.g. Shmuel Hugo Bergman, Ernst Simon, and, from a younger generation, Eliezer Schweid.

³⁸ A number of educational and cultural programmes in Oranim have been conducted mainly by ex-members of the *Shdemot* circle and their pupils since 1975, when several members of the circle began to devote themselves to the study and promulgation of Judaism under its auspices. Ufaz, 'Jewish Sources', 235-6.

In this, the kibbutz was no doubt influenced by a general trend in Israeli society. From the mid-1950s onwards many intellectuals, educators, and politicians began to fear that Israel might lose its Jewish character—a concern which led to the adoption of the ‘Jewish consciousness’ programme in non-religious primary schools towards the end of the decade. But the fact that this concept fell on fertile ground stems from the educational background of the younger generation in the kibbutzim. In all the non-religious kibbutz movements the Bible was taught not as a sacred text, but rather as a source-book for Jewish history, culture, and social values. It is no wonder, then, that the introduction of passages from the Bible into the adults’ *kabbalat shabbat* followed on very similar practices in kindergarten and school: the founding fathers’ fears of ‘clericalization’ were meaningless to a generation educated on the Bible. And it was largely people from this generation, aided and encouraged by the ‘cultural activists’ mentioned above, who attempted to broaden and deepen the Jewishness of kibbutz culture.³⁹

Some instances may be cited to illustrate this trend. Since the time of the Second Aliya, Shavuot⁴⁰ had been celebrated as the festival of the first fruits, with song and dance, agricultural competitions, and a ceremony emphasizing the work and achievements of the farm branches. From the 1960s onwards readings were often added to the text of the ceremony recalling that Shavuot was traditionally the time of the giving of the Torah to the Jewish people on Mount Sinai; and various versions of the ‘night of vigil’ (*leil shimurim*) when Orthodox Jews spend the first night of the festival studying the Torah, were introduced. In many kibbutzim, the character of Yom Kippur changed over the years. For many years this had been regarded as the clerical festival *par excellence*: in the main it was ignored, though those who fasted were excused work, and some attended religious services in nearby settlements. During the 1950s most kibbutzim began to recognize it as an official holiday, and many invited a cantor from outside the kibbutz (often from the Kibbutz Dati) to conduct a religious service for those interested; a growing number of members also began to fast. Often, too, Yom Kippur was celebrated as a secular Day of Reckoning, with such activities as an annual general meeting, or discussions about basic aspects of life in the kibbutz or the state, or a series of study circles on various aspects of Judaism.

Passover is one of the outstanding examples of cultural creativity of this sort. Following the development of many local traditions, by 1953

³⁹ See e.g. Maletz, ‘The Culture of the Kvutza’.

⁴⁰ The Feast of Weeks, roughly equivalent to Whitsun.

each of the kibbutz movements was producing its own Haggada, and by 1971 they had all reached a more or less standard form. They differed from the traditional Haggada in many ways: in the explicit telling of the biblical story of the Exodus; in the continuation of the story until the arrival of the Jewish people in the Promised Land, with numerous allusions to modern parallels; and in the introduction of the theme of spring, illustrated with song and verse. Each kibbutz used this text as a basis for its ceremony, many adding favourite readings of their own or omitting others to suit their taste. In some the community sang all the songs, while in others they were performed by the local choir. Many used the 'Yagur Haggada', a complex choral and orchestral setting by Yehuda Sharett.

In all kibbutzim Passover was celebrated by the whole community, with all the members and their children gathered together in the dining-room. Here is an account of Passover in Kfar Gil'adi in the 1940s and early 1950s, recounted more than twenty years later by a woman who was a child at the time:

My Passover is smells, tastes, sights and melodies. When I remember the Passover of my childhood, a pleasant feeling comes over me to this very day. Smells of cleaning—the great blocks of soap, masses of water, damp wood, fresh soda. And, above all, the odours of the fields. We, the youngest schoolchildren, had a special task: to bring the floral decorations to the dining-hall: wild flowers, chrysanthemums, poppies. The walls were covered with arches made of pine branches, and we helped in this, too. We were there all the time—touching, smelling, carrying, helping.

Next, the great rolls of white cloth were unrolled onto the immensely long tables, and they, too, were covered in colour—cutlery, bottles of wine, flowers, and the like. And then the food: the smell and taste of the dumplings, and the special Passover fruit delicacy. . . .

In the afternoon, dressed in our colourful new clothes, we all went out to the fields for the cutting of the Omer.⁴¹ The bringing of the Omer to the hall was the first part of the evening programme, and we children had a special part in it. We would wait outside [until the adults were seated] and then make our way between the rows of people waving the sheaves, while everyone sang 'And you shall wave the Omer . . .'. We would bring them to the central stage, and pass them on to the dancers, all the time surrounded by the smell of the sheaves, the smell of the field, the smell of reaping. The singing, the music, the dancing, the people gathering, the sparkly clean clothes—all these made this one of the most beautiful parts of the festival. And again, prominent in my memories—the smell

⁴¹ A sheaf of barley, originally offered up as a sacrifice at the Temple, which underlined the significance of Passover as an agricultural festival, the festival of spring.

of the fields and the sights of my childhood—the smell of the newly cut barley, the hills around, the valley below. . . . Even today, the sight of a field of barley stirs my emotions.

Afterwards, the Seder.⁴² As a child, I always felt that it went on for a very long time. But I loved all the songs. For me, Passover is a festival of songs, which I still love to hear and sing. And I loved the reading of the Haggada. As soon as I had learnt to read, and follow the text, I was so proud of myself! As time went on, I learnt to understand and love the passages which were read again year after year. When I grew up, I took part in the dancing and singing—the same dances, the same songs, the same melodies, which bring back memories of a wonderful childhood.

I write all this because of the stories which recently appeared in the news-sheet, from which it seems as if anyone who didn't spend a traditional Passover as a child in his grandfather's house is missing something. I don't feel that way, for I had no grandparents in the kibbutz. My experience was connected with the preparations, the participation in oft-repeated events, the involvement with adults, and the feelings for the festival which they passed on to me.⁴³

Clearly, then, by the 1950s the kibbutz community had found satisfying ways of celebrating Jewish cultural traditions, and had had some success in passing them on to the younger generation. But this article also raised a number of questions about the kibbutz Passover. It appeared in reaction to a number of articles in the newsletter of kibbutz Dan extolling the virtues of the Seder night in a traditional Jewish household. And the writer herself added: 'What of all this are we leaving to our children, what will they pass on to their sons and daughters?' In part, her doubts presumably sprang from the fact that kibbutz Dan belonged to the Kibbutz Artzi, which was ideologically more extreme than the other movements in its opposition to the religious character of the traditional festivals. They also stemmed from the tendency towards familialism beginning to be felt at this date, and the feeling that in the big modern kibbutz community the combination of size and institutionalization preclude the creation of intimate family feeling, however high the artistic and organizational level. In this area, as in others, the kibbutz community constantly engaged in self-criticism and attempted to explore new ways of cultural expression.⁴⁴

⁴² The reading of the text telling of the Exodus from Egypt—in this case, adapted to the customs of the kibbutz.

⁴³ Ronen, 'My Passover'. The author was born in 1937, and the period of which she writes is from about 1942 to 1955.

⁴⁴ There is probably more research and commentary on the Haggada than on any other aspect of kibbutz culture. For instance, Avshalom Reich analysed thirty-five years' development of the kibbutz Haggada, and concluded that the standard *haggadot* of the

Culture Day by Day

The cultural life of a community is not composed only of sabbaths and festivals. Every kibbutz, apart from the youngest, had its cemetery, and each developed its own funeral services and mourning customs. Here, too, there was a slow development from extreme rejection of religious forms to a conscious attempt to fuse traditional ways of expression with the values of the community. In the early years of the kibbutz, the dead were buried in silence, and there was no formal period of mourning. Gradually, however, each kibbutz found its own forms for the collective expression of grief at the graveside, such as biblical and literary readings, and eulogies by friends and relatives. Traditional elements which had been rejected in the early anti-clerical days of the kibbutz movement also began to appear: the recital of traditional prayers such as *El Male Rahamim* and *Kadish* at the funeral, and the observance of the traditional seven days of mourning by the family.⁴⁵ At times of joy and sorrow the essential unity of the kibbutz community is palpable, and adds an element of happiness or comfort to the emotions of the individual. With the increasing complexity of kibbutz society, and the greater part played by the nuclear and extended family, it was no longer possible to take this unity for granted. The members no longer drank afternoon tea together in the dining-hall: by 1960, each couple's house had facilities for making small meals, and the kibbutz provided an allocation of tea, coffee, sugar, and the like. So from the mid-1960s most kibbutzim built a small club-room, or adapted existing premises for the purpose; in the Kibbutz Artzi such a room formed part of the standard plan for dining-halls. By 1977 virtually every kibbutz had such a meeting-place.⁴⁶ Here it was possible to have a cup of coffee and a cake, read a newspaper or journal, have an informal chat, or hear a lecture in the evening when the children were in bed. As the general meetings became smaller, many kibbutzim moved their venue from the dining-hall to the club-room.

However, the dining-hall remained the centre of the kibbutz in many respects. Here were held the better-attended cultural activities: films,

kibbutz movements in the 1970s did not give expression to the 'ideological searchings' which had appeared in the local *haggadot* in former years. In his view, they expressed no more than a 'timeless-traditional doctrine', a generalized hatred for war, and the desire that Israel should be a just and lawful state. Aryeh Ben-Gurion, on the other hand, contrasts these *haggadot* with that in use in the Diaspora, and found an emphasis on the element of spring, the biblical story of the Exodus, and the theme of salvation from slavery. Reich, 'Passover Haggadot'; Ben-Gurion, 'How does the Traditional Haggada Differ?'

⁴⁵ Rubin, 'Death Customs'.

⁴⁶ Rosner, *Changes in Leisure Culture*, 27.

folk-dancing, light entertainment, lectures on current affairs. Much cultural activity, particularly in the big kibbutzim such as Giv'at Brenner, was organized or performed by the members themselves, or by the younger generation. This also applied to sport: Giv'at Brenner had a basketball team which played in the national league, and many other kibbutzim had football, basketball, and water polo teams which took part in local leagues. It should, be added, however, that, as with the great majority of Israelis, sport played very little part in the leisure activities of the average adult kibbutz member. The rise in standards of living during the 1970s brought with it the provision of sporting facilities such as gymnasia, swimming pools, and tennis courts. But, except for a dedicated few, the pool served mainly as a gathering-place for families during their leisure hours rather than a venue for serious sporting activities. A survey conducted in the early 1970s showed that, as in the rest of Israel, sport did not occupy even 1 per cent of kibbutz members' leisure time: the main pastimes were study and what are described as 'social activities'. And there is no evidence that this state of affairs changed to any appreciable degree during the following decade, apart from the addition of television.⁴⁷

The 1970s saw the start of a marked change in cultural habits, and in the demands of kibbutz members. They were now less satisfied with what they themselves could supply, and demanded professional standards of culture and entertainment. The cultural committees of the kibbutz movements began to compile lists of lecturers and entertainers, who provided much more varied fare than the political and cultural lectures of movement officials and leaders which had been the standard offering a decade earlier. As standards of living rose, most kibbutzim were able to purchase tickets to plays and concerts in nearby towns. Thus, side by side with the autonomous culture to be found in the yearly cycle of the festivals and such local celebrations as weddings or barmitzvas, there was a rapid growth of what was known somewhat derogatively as 'bought' or 'imported' culture, but which none the less satisfied a very widespread demand.

The demand for higher standards also applied to creative and educational activities which had hitherto been conducted by each kibbutz on an amateur basis, with whatever talent came to hand. During the 1970s the local authorities in many regions began to organize courses of study, folk-dancing groups, choirs, and educational and recreational rambles, all of them under the guidance of experts. The library services, too, were in

⁴⁷ Katz and Gurevitch, *The Culture of Leisure*, 62.

constant use: in 1972, more than 90 per cent of the kibbutz population used them, as against fewer than 20 per cent in the towns, but there were constant complaints about the lack of young and qualified librarians. Standards were gradually improved by the establishment of regional libraries serving a number of kibbutzim. Virtually every kibbutz had a library of its own, serving both adults and children, and special requests were met through the regional collections.⁴⁸

There were similar developments on the national level. By 1975 each of the three major kibbutz movements had its own choir, which met monthly for three days of intensive rehearsal, followed by one or more concerts, in kibbutzim and to wider audiences.⁴⁹ The Kibbutz Chamber Orchestra, the Kibbutz Dance Troupe, and the Kibbutz Stage Group worked on a similar semi-professional basis. All of these groups performed before a wide public, and most of them made successful tours abroad. In addition, the cultural committee of the Federation of Kibbutz Movements organized a wide variety of activities, from nature rambles and archaeological tours to chess tournaments, from courses for librarians to artists' workshops.⁵⁰

A comparative study of the use of leisure time published in 1973 showed that the number of cultural and recreational activities available to kibbutz members was several times greater per head than those accessible even in the largest Israeli towns.⁵¹ In 1977 cultural activities were no less intensive, but their content had changed significantly: kibbutz members were becoming ever more exposed to professional standards of culture, both as consumers and as active participants in the creative and learning processes. The advent of television would lead to an intensification of this trend; but at this point that change had only just begun.

Music

The process of professionalization can be seen most typically in the sphere of music.⁵² Before 1948, and in the early years of the existence of

⁴⁸ Katz and Gurevitch, *The Culture of Leisure*, 239. Between 1965 and 1980 the Federation of Kibbutz Movements issued a professional journal for kibbutz librarians (*Dapim Lasafran Hakibbutzi*), in which the processes described here are reflected.

⁴⁹ The first of these choirs, which was generally deemed to be the most successful, was that of the Ihud, founded only a year after the movement itself. Ihud, *Two Years*, 27.

⁵⁰ For a full list of national and regional cultural activities of the kibbutz movements in 1980 see Liptzin, *The Culture of Leisure*, 144-6. All of these activities were taking place by 1977.

⁵¹ Katz and Gurevitch, *The Culture of Leisure*, 78. The most common leisure pastimes in the kibbutzim were adult education and 'social activities', as against television and social activities in the towns. *Ibid.* 62.

⁵² This section is mainly based on Shahar, *Musical Life*.

the State of Israel, musical activities such as communal singing and dancing, or attending concerts of classical music within the kibbutz or outside it, embraced virtually the whole of the kibbutz community. They were enhanced by choirs and instrumental groups which performed both for their own satisfaction and as an integral part of the festivals and other public events. Gradually, however, the numbers participating in communal 'song-fests' and the like dwindled, and they turned into occasional events organized by the cultural committee, often with the help of a professional 'leader' from outside the kibbutz. Similarly, the audience for classical music concerts dropped, and their place was largely taken by performances of light popular music. As the standard of performing groups at the local and national level rose, they increasingly made use of professional conductors and choirmasters, and performed for the general public rather than for kibbutz audiences. All of these developments reflect one general trend, from musical activity of the whole community at an amateur level to growing passivity, accompanied by professionalization of the active minority.

This trend is also exemplified in the activities of kibbutz composers. In the pre-state period they usually composed in their spare time, working mainly in the framework of the general cultural activities of the community. By the 1950s most of them were engaged in music as a full-time occupation, as teachers, cultural co-ordinators, and the like, and the great majority had received some degree of formal musical education. But from the early 1960s onwards many began to turn their attention outwards, and compose not primarily for the society in which they lived, but for a more general Israeli, and even worldwide, audience, and this trend became dominant in the 1970s. Their works include orchestral, chamber, and choral compositions, written in the styles characteristic of Israeli music—post-Romantic and Mediterranean, as well as dodecaphonic, sonoristic, aleatoric, and electronic music; but none of these composers have as yet achieved general recognition as more than minor talents.

This does not apply, however, to the field of popular music. Some kibbutz composers, such as Matitياهو Shelem of Ramat Yohanan and David Zehavi of Na'an have made a substantial contribution to Israeli folk music. The major themes of their work—Jewish festivals, especially those connected with nature and the seasons; landscape and homeland; children's songs; and love- and mood-songs—while often rooted in the ambience of the kibbutz, have an appeal to a much broader audience. Their work has played an important part in the development of Israeli popular culture.

Artistic Creation

The changing status and attitudes of kibbutz composers are in many ways typical of the situation of the creative artist in the kibbutz in many other fields. This has been a controversial issue since the 1930s. Although in principle every kibbutz, and every kibbutz movement, was interested in encouraging artistic creativity of all sorts, they were not always anxious to allocate working days and expensive materials for this purpose, particularly to people who almost by definition were often undisciplined and individualistic. Though many had left the kibbutz as a result of the tensions inherent in this situation, a number of first-rate artists in many fields were kibbutz members, enjoyed a considerable reputation, and often earned a good deal of money for their kibbutzim. The kibbutz movements had for many years maintained publishing houses: Sifriat Hapo'alim was founded by the Kibbutz Artzi, and the Kibbutz Me'uhad's publishing house bore its name. And there were art galleries, open to the public, at Ein Harod and Hazore'a, as well as the Kibbutz Gallery in Tel Aviv, which was founded specifically in order to promote the sale of kibbutz artists' work. However, for the less well known, the less talented, and the less commercially successful, the problem was still acute. It was solved, at least on the institutional level, by the foundation of guilds of graphic artists and sculptors, writers, photographers, and composers. They assessed the work of aspiring artists, and the kibbutzim allocated time for creative work according to their classification. Although these 'tests' often led to a great deal of tension and resentment, they defused many disputes between the artist and the community by referring them to an objective authority.

Sometimes as a result of these arrangements, in other cases in deliberate defiance of the establishment, a number of outstanding artists in many fields flourished and made their reputations during this period.

Other Arts

Similar developments, and similar tensions, can be discerned in the sphere of literature. Literary creation continued to proliferate, in local news-sheets, the kibbutz movements' ideological journals—each of which devoted at least a third of its space to short stories, poems, and literary criticism—and in the general press and literary journals. For a short period, in the early 1950s, there was an attempt to stimulate a school of *littérature engagé*, mobilized to promote kibbutz values; and until the War of Independence much of the literary production had been of this

type. From 1949 onwards, however, the relationship between the individual and the kibbutz, and universal themes presented against the background of the kibbutz community, began to predominate.⁵³ Writers who were kibbutz members did not, of course, confine themselves to kibbutz themes: the earliest works of Nathan Shaham, Amos Oz, and Yonat and Alexander Sened, the best-known kibbutz novelists, are all about the kibbutz, but each of them developed broader themes in their later novels. Kibbutz writers have also published a considerable quantity of poetry on a number of themes; but neither in verse nor in prose is there a kibbutz school of creative writing to parallel the body of folk music mentioned above.⁵⁴

Nor is there a kibbutz school of plastic art. But, side by side with the creative work of the art schools (particularly at Oranim and the regional college of Tel Hai in Upper Galilee), a number of individuals have produced work of the highest quality: among others, the sculptor Yehiel Shemi of Kabri, and the painters Moshe Kuperman of Lohamei Hageta'ot, Shraga Weil of Ha'ogen, and Shmuel Katz of Ga'aton.

This short and necessarily superficial account would not be complete without mention of the very large number of creative artists who were once kibbutz members (or close to the kibbutz, in the youth movement or the Palmach) but have since left, and whose work very often reflects their kibbutz background in its content or way of thought. Foremost among these in the literary field are the poet Haim Guri, and the novelists S. Yizhar, A. B. Yehoshua, Aharon Meged, and Moshe Shamir; in folk music Naomi Shemer and Nahum Heimann; and in popular music Matti Caspi, Hanan Yovel, Meir Ariel, and Yoram Tehar-Lev.

Television

The advent of television in the spring of 1968 marked a major turning-point in the culture of the whole of Israeli society, including the kibbutz. From the first, it was clear that, while television was potentially a powerful instrument for education and the dissemination of culture, it could also do much harm to the cultural ambience of the kibbutz by increasing the influence of unacceptable values, reducing participation in social activities and in the machinery of self-government, and promoting passive cultural norms.⁵⁵ On the other hand, it was clearly inevitable that

⁵³ Hadomi, 'Literary Representations'.

⁵⁴ Issue 13 of the research journal *Hakibbutz* (1990) was entirely devoted to the literature of the kibbutz.

⁵⁵ Gurevitch and Loevy, 'Television in the Kibbutz'; and see the memorandum of the cultural committees of the Kibbutz movements to the Federation of Kibbutz Movements (1968), quoted in Shur, 'Socio-Cultural Planning', 147-8.

this medium would, like radio, would sooner or later become part of kibbutz life.

There was also an economic and social aspect to the question. There were very few kibbutzim which could not afford to buy a few television sets for the cultural centre or the school. But many members were interested in having a set in their own home, and this would entail a considerable investment for the kibbutz—or lead to a situation where those with private means or connections could purchase sets and, in the long run, commit the kibbutz to a process of levelling up: the 'electric kettle syndrome'.⁵⁶

Several attempts were made at a national level to mitigate the influence of television. An effort to persuade the broadcasting authorities to take the needs of the kibbutzim into consideration in their programming (for instance, not to screen the most popular programmes on Saturday evenings, the usual time of the general meetings) failed completely. But a more positive approach bore some fruit. The cultural departments of the movements co-operated to run courses in television production for kibbutz members, and a studio was established for the creation of television and, later, video programmes of special interest to the kibbutz public. A number of interesting and attractive programmes were produced.

For a number of years the majority of kibbutzim managed to control the acquisition of sets, allowing them only in public places such as the dining-hall or the club-house and the children's quarters. But the number in the members' rooms increased steadily, though with less speed in the more disciplined Kibbutz Artzi and the religious kibbutzim than in the other movements. By the end of the 1970s a family television set was a universally accepted item of equipment, in the kibbutz as elsewhere in Israel, and kibbutzim were providing them for members who had not managed to obtain them by other means.⁵⁷

In the early 1980s a very similar process took place with the introduction of colour television. By now attempts were being made to appraise the effect of the introduction of the new medium on the life of the kibbutz. In one sense, it was virtually impossible to assess some of the worst dangers anticipated in the 1960s: the influence of violence and explicit sex, and of constant exposure to commercial values in films and advertisements, on the mores of adults and children could not be subjected to any simple quantitative test; indeed, the question whether these

⁵⁶ See p. 295 below on patterns of consumption.

⁵⁷ Shur, 'Communitality, Progress and Television'.

dangers are outweighed by the broadening of horizons and artistic experience which can also be derived from television is still a matter of worldwide controversy. The coming of television undoubtedly impaired the ongoing cultural programmes of the kibbutzim.⁶⁸ But there could be no doubt that its existence would continue to be a basic factor in their educational and cultural life.

Culture Lag

In many respects the social structure of the kibbutz permits great flexibility in adapting to new situations. But habits and casts of mind which have been acquired over a period of decades are not as easy to change as crops and industrial products. The kibbutz, no less than any other society, may suffer from culture lag in many spheres.

One example is the question of the agrarian ethos. The history of the kibbutz, the biographies of most of its members, and much of its cultural life, have always been connected with the land, the direct link between man and nature, and the agricultural cycle. Few urban kibbutzim survived for any length of time, though a number were tried. Village life, in all of its aspects, was one of the factors which added social cohesion to the kibbutz community, and this bias was felt in the educational system, with its emphasis on such subjects as biology and nature studies. During the 1970s, however, it became clear that there was a growing tension between the rural ethos and the rapid industrialization of the kibbutz. Despite the pride with which theorists spoke of the synthesis of agriculture and industry, there were many uncertainties about the proper balance between the two, and whether future economic developments would permit social control of this issue. Meanwhile, however, the agrarian ethos continued to play a major role in kibbutz life and thought, including its educational system.

No less important is the effect of the kibbutzim's military past on the character of their members. The years which I have called the heroic period of kibbutz history, from 1936 to 1948, had a formative effect: ever since then, the ideal of dedication to the physical defence of the state has been a major component of its image and self-image. During these years the kibbutz movement lived in a state of siege, or something very close to it, giving high, if not absolute, priority to matters of defence.

These efforts exacted a high price in blood. But they exacted another

⁶⁸ In a survey conducted in 1985 just over half of the secretaries of 161 kibbutzim claimed that it had some negative effect, and 31% that it impeded them to a considerable extent. *Ibid.* 31.

penalty, which is fully discernible only in retrospect. A whole generation, growing up under conditions of physical danger, acquired many of the qualities they required: readiness for self-sacrifice, obedience to authority, a stiff upper lip in the face of adversity. Equipped with these qualities, this was the generation which fought and, in many cases, died in the wars of 1967 and 1973, as pilots, junior officers, and NCOs in the IDF. But they also tended to be, for the same reason, pragmatic, taciturn, to a certain degree machoistic: not necessarily the qualities most suited to a democratic, humanistic, and egalitarian society.

The emphasis on the military aspects of the kibbutz's contribution to the state, reinforced by the ideological bent of the times, was a historical necessity. But it did not necessarily equip the kibbutz movement, or those who had been educated during this period, for the exigencies of peace. In 1929 a young kibbutznik said to one of the leaders of the kibbutz movement: 'If you were to come to us and demand that we sacrifice ourselves for the sake of Zionism, we would gladly agree. But if you're asking us to talk politely to each other, to respect each other and so forth—you won't find many like that among us.'⁵⁹ Shortly afterwards history provided him and his generation with challenges enough. But reading his words today one feels that they are almost prophetic.

PATTERNS OF CONSUMPTION

My discussion of consumption in Volume I enumerated a number of problems which began to be felt in the mid-1930s, but were largely ignored during the period of national emergency which lasted until 1945: the intrinsic difficulty of assessing needs above a very rudimentary level; the tension between the individual and office-holders engendered by disputes on these matters; the tendency for the principle of equality to be interpreted rigidly, without consideration for the individual; and the many cases in which gifts from outside the kibbutz were used to 'take care of the members' minor needs' when the financial state of the community prevented it from doing so.⁶⁰ These problems reached a critical state in the latter years of the Second World War; against the background of the contrast between the austerity of kibbutz life and the rising standard of living of the country as a whole. The thousands of kibbutz members who had served in the British army during the war had become

⁵⁹ Reported by Joseph Baratz, and quoted in Ben-Avram, *Hever Hakvutzot*, 281.

⁶⁰ See *KM* i. 383-4.

used to ensuring their personal comfort in the interstices of the military system. With their demobilization, possessions such as an electric kettle, a paraffin stove, or various objects of furniture not provided by the kibbutz began to appear in the members' rooms. At the same time, the post-war atmosphere of relaxation and the feeling of increasing prosperity in the country led to a widespread demand for the community to pay greater attention to the needs of the individual. As a result, budgets for items of consumption were raised and in most kibbutzim a conscious effort made to provide a varied selection of goods.

In many cases specific problems were solved by what came to be known as the 'electric kettle syndrome': a process of levelling up whereby, after a substantial number of members had acquired a particular type of article, the kibbutz provided it for those who had not managed to obtain it from outside sources. But there was still a great deal of dissatisfaction and social friction which stemmed from the very nature of 'communal consumption'. The community not only decided the financial limits of matters such as the standard of clothing and furniture: it also interpreted such decisions in terms of taste, dictating the style of the goods bought. Often, for instance, the kibbutz clothing store would buy clothes or fabric from a cheap wholesale source such as the central store of the kibbutz movement; the result was a uniformity (and low standard) of clothing which meant that on a visit to town a kibbutz member would be told 'You look like a kibbutznik'—a description which was often a source of pride but, in this context, also of some embarrassment. In many cases, too, the fact that the community was represented by a single person or a small committee led to interpersonal friction and psychological strain. During the late 1940s and the 1950s there was a widespread demand to change the system of distribution in order to give the individual more freedom of choice and reduce his or her dependence on the official kibbutz institutions. As a result, this period saw the inception of some fundamental changes in this area.

The major change was from a system of 'norms' to one of a 'personal budget': each member was credited with a standard sum of money, which could be spent on items within the range covered by that budget—clothing, furniture, or toilet articles and other small items. Such a change was considered by many, and particularly by the leadership of all the kibbutz movements, to be a serious blow to the principle of collective consumption: they believed that it would lead to commercialized relationships between the individual and the community, make the family (rather than the individual) a 'consumption unit', and increase inequality

between members. Its advocates claimed that it was simply a new, and more elastic, interpretation of the principle 'to each according to his needs': the system of norms was unable to satisfy the needs of a variegated community with a rising standard of living, and the personal budget would increase the satisfaction of the individual and reduce social friction.

The change began in Hever Hakvutzot, a few of whose kibbutzim adopted the personal budget system for clothing and toilet articles as early as 1946-7. The federative nature of this movement made it easier for the individual communities to make their own decisions on such matters, despite the opposition of the leaders. After the creation of the Ihud in 1951 the system spread through the whole of the new movement, and by 1962 had been adopted by all but two of its kibbutzim.⁶¹

A similar process led to a further development, known as the 'inclusive budget'. When the personal budget was first inaugurated, it was hoped to mitigate its deleterious effects by forbidding the transfer of credit from one budget to another: money allocated for clothes could not be spent on shoes or toilet articles, even if the member had a positive balance in his account. This principle was gradually eroded, and in the course of the 1970s most of the kibbutzim of the Ihud adopted the principle of the inclusive budget, which was based on allocations for each group of items of expenditure, but allocated to each family as a lump sum.

Within the Kibbutz Me'uhad and the Kibbutz Artzi, with their more centralized traditions, the pressures were similar to those in the Ihud, but the pace of change was very much slower. Each of them adopted methods of distribution designed to allow greater freedom of choice while retaining the principles of collective consumption and public control over the individual's standard of living. But members' demands for control over their own budgets proved to be irresistible. In 1968 the personal budget was pronounced legitimate by the central committee of the Kibbutz Me'uhad, and by the end of the 1970s, despite much initial opposition, most of its kibbutzim had adopted the inclusive budget. The Kibbutz Artzi was more successful than the other movements in resisting these tendencies, but despite strenuous efforts by the leadership to prevent the adoption of the personal budget, it gradually spread. The movement's 1975 conference tacitly accepted this system, but rejected the inclusive budget—even though twenty-six of the movement's seventy-eight settlements had adopted this practice, or something close to it.⁶²

⁶¹ Ronen, 'Changes in Gratification', 116-18.

⁶² *Ibid.* 159, 162, 169.

As these arrangements spread, many kibbutzim, in all the movements, moderated the tendency to monetarization of the system by retaining or returning to the principle of 'free distribution', or allocation according to need, in a number of areas which were particularly irksome: working clothes were excluded from the monetary budget, toilet articles and other supplies were available on demand in the kibbutz store, journeys by public transport were paid for by the kibbutz, and members' travel on the vehicles belonging to the kibbutz was subsidized.⁶³

Although the questions discussed here were of great importance both to the individual kibbutz member and to the movements' policy-makers and ideologists, the budgets which they affected covered no more than 30 per cent of total consumption.⁶⁴ In most areas of kibbutz life—food, education, housing, and most aspects of cultural activity—the principle of free distribution, or of the assessment of need by publicly accepted standards or elected committees, was accepted without question.

In this context, one further aspect of the application of the principle 'to each according to his needs' should be mentioned. Many scarce goods—primarily housing, but also items such as furniture and electrical equipment—were allocated according to a rough criterion of need which took into account seniority and the size of the family. By the mid-1960s all the kibbutz movements had adopted rules for determining seniority, and members who moved from one kibbutz to another retained the rights which they had attained in their previous home.⁶⁵

In general, however, the tendency to express the principle of equality in monetary terms, and the abandonment of what was called 'kibbutz equality'—the criterion of need—was dominant, if not yet universal. But there were many individuals who freed themselves from the constraints of the system by using gifts from relatives, failing to hand in legacies or reparations, and the like. The existence of 'private money' was an important stimulus for the changes in the system of distribution, now as at an earlier period.⁶⁶ But these changes did not alleviate the problem: on the contrary, as the accepted standard of living rose and the number of members with weak convictions grew, the existence of a 'grey economy' alongside the official system, and often supplementing it, became an accepted feature of kibbutz life.⁶⁷ In the words of one scholar,

⁶³ Gluck *et al.*, *Consumption in the Kibbutz*, 1.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Kibbutz Me'uhad, *Ways of Life*, 65–6.

⁶⁶ See *KM* i. 384.

⁶⁷ For instance in the process of acquiring television sets, as described above; or in the practice of encouraging young couples to use wedding gifts to furnish their rooms, often at a standard far above that provided by the kibbutz.

its existence, which in the early days of the kibbutz had been a social deviation, had by the end of the 1970s entered the field of *anomie*—an area where social norms were uncertain, and there was a conflict between the official rules and the generally accepted practice.⁶⁸ This problem was the subject of many indecisive discussions both at movement level and in the individual kibbutzim. By the nature of things, its extent is difficult to estimate, though a very rough idea can be gained from the fact that in a survey conducted in 1978 18 per cent of those questioned admitted to having private bank accounts.⁶⁹ But there can be no doubt that it was a serious infringement of the principle of equality which was still declared to be one of the central features of kibbutz life and thought.

GENDER

In the first volume of this book the real situation of kibbutz women was contrasted with the widely accepted image of the emancipated woman, able to develop a career as well as bear children, working and fighting alongside her male comrades in complete equality. The historical record shows that, although women were emancipated in the political sense from the first days of the kibbutz, career differentiation began with the birth of the first child: men were very rarely employed in child care, although they had an important place in the educational system from school age onwards; and, with a few notable exceptions, the great majority of women in the administrative and political machinery of the kibbutz, at local and movement level, were active in 'feminine' areas such as education or culture. Their involvement in other areas was often the result of the 'rule of the third', which laid down that 30 per cent of the members of important committees should be women.⁷⁰

From 1939 onwards this state of affairs changed but little. The separate role of women had become a universal and, in the view of many, an inevitable part of kibbutz life. In particular, women worked mainly in the 'service branches'—education and child care, kitchen, dining-hall and clothing store; in the governing bodies of the kibbutz they were active in committees such as those for education and culture, rather than those for economic affairs; and in general meetings they spoke less than the men. Moreover, as young kibbutz-born women began to be absorbed into the community, it became clear that they were perpetuating the

⁶⁸ Shur, *Deviance, Anomie and Structural Equality*.

⁶⁹ Gluck *et al.*, *Consumption in the Kibbutz*, 4.

⁷⁰ See KM i. 368–71.

situation. The great majority worked in education and child care, rather than agriculture or industry, or even than the kitchen and clothing store—both because of the exigencies of the labour situation and because of their own preferences.

This phenomenon was widespread in all the kibbutz movements, but was discussed most intensively in the Kibbutz Artzi.⁷¹ It quickly became apparent that the trend to professional differentiation was a sociological fact which it was exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to reverse. The decisions of the Kibbutz Artzi in 1958, taken after a lengthy debate, sum up the general attitude of all the movements at this time:

The kibbutz set itself the goal of liberating its women members from the traditional occupations which have been their lot throughout the generations. The kibbutz woman has participated—and still aims to participate—to the best of her ability in the various branches of the [kibbutz] economy. Her involvement in them is of great social, economic, and moral value.

The equal right of men and women to choose their occupations in productive branches, in the framework of the needs of the kibbutz, must be put into practice.

Though every type of work does honour to those who engage in it, the council emphasizes that it is essential that the kibbutzim make the maximum effort to increase the entry of women into the different agricultural and economic branches, and to ensure appropriate training which will enable them to reach a reasonable professional standard.

None the less, the fact that, now and in the future, most women will be occupied in education and the service branches cannot be ignored.

The woman's satisfaction from her work depends on her conditions of work. The time has come to ensure that the service branches achieve a standard of mechanization and efficiency consonant with their importance in the life of the kibbutz.⁷²

This declaration was followed by a series of practical suggestions. But it took several years for these decisions, and others like them, to take effect: eight years later an article in the movement's ideological journal

⁷¹ From 1948 to 1977 *Hedim*, the ideological journal of the Kibbutz Artzi, published forty-six articles dealing with various aspects of 'the woman problem'; *Niv Hakvutza*, journal of Hever Hakvutzot/Ihud published thirty-one; and *Mibifnim*, journal of Kibbutz Me'uhad, published eleven. On the family (including the controversy over children's sleeping-quarters) the figures were: *Hedim*, twenty-nine; *Niv Hakvutza*, twenty-one; *Mibifnim*, three. The Kibbutz Artzi held a special council meeting to discuss the question, and was the first of the movements to establish a department for women's affairs (in 1956), though for several years this functioned rather intermittently. Kibbutz Artzi, *From Council to Council*, 40-1; Kibbutz Artzi, *From Conference to Conference*, 44-5.

⁷² Decisions of Kibbutz Artzi council, Ein Hashofet, May-June 1958. *Hedim*, 58 (July 1958), 173-5.

suggested precisely the same remedies.⁷³ From the mid-1960s onwards there was considerable progress in the professionalization of the service branches: the physical burden of kitchen work was lightened by increased mechanization; a wide range of courses for workers in child care and the other 'service' branches was developed; and women were encouraged to pursue courses of higher education, particularly in areas relevant to their professional occupations.⁷⁴ But the tendency of women to engage primarily in 'women's' occupations, in the spheres of work and of kibbutz administration, was intensified.

The contrast between the declared ideological aims of the kibbutz and the social realities is well exemplified in the issue of women's hours of work. In the words of a young mother of two:

It is very hard for me to bear the burden of agricultural work, even though I want to, and I have a permanent job in the orchards. But, after all, we ask ourselves: 'Why do we have to struggle so hard just in order to work in agriculture? Everyone knows that a day's work in the fields is very long and very hard. It involves being outside in the sun, in the broiling heat of the Jordan valley, all day long. And when you get home, you have to tidy the [family] room, and look after the children. And you get exhausted. . . . We have to establish [special] standards for women who work in the field, especially when they have small children.

At the same discussion another woman remarked: 'When they knew I was coming here, all the women told me to raise the question of shortening women's working hours.'⁷⁵ This demand had been voiced in the movement literature as early as 1955. It was stubbornly resisted for many years, by male and female ideologists alike, on the grounds that it condoned an unjust division of labour within the family and that it would lead to neglect of other, more urgent, aspects of the problem.⁷⁶ It was only in the mid-1960s that recompense was made to the woman for a state of affairs which was virtually universal, and the standard working day reduced by an hour for mothers of two and for all women over 35.⁷⁷

⁷³ Adar, 'The [Female] Kibbutz Member'.

⁷⁴ Kibbutz Artzi, *Between Conference and Conference*, 44-5.

⁷⁵ Gallili, 'Integrating Women'. The quotations are from a discussion between young women from thirteen kibbutzim of the Kibbutz Me'uhad, in Aug. 1963.

⁷⁶ Articles arguing for and against the proposed change appeared in *Hedim*, journal of the Kibbutz Artzi, at least once a year from 1955 to 1958, and in *Mibifnim*, journal of the Kibbutz Me'uhad, in 1958. In the Ihud the official line was to oppose any significant change, but many kibbutzim made their own decisions and shortened working hours in much the same way as the Kibbutz Artzi.

⁷⁷ This was decided by the Kibbutz Artzi's special conference on women's problems in 1966, though not every kibbutz complied with the decision immediately. Kibbutz Artzi, *Between Conference and Conference*, 45.

Thus the social and economic pressures of the system combined with the wishes of the women themselves to produce a clear differentiation between the occupations and preoccupations of men and women both in work and in after-work activities—however much this state of affairs conflicted with the traditional ideology of all the kibbutz movements. These facts became quite clear as the surveys of occupations and aspirations of women became increasingly more broadly based and methodologically more sophisticated. They were brought forcibly to the notice of the kibbutz movement and the world with the publication of Tiger and Shepher's controversial book, published in 1975.⁷⁸ The authors summed up the mass of published research, together with their own work, to produce a factual summary the great majority of which was not disputed even by their severest critics. Their main findings were that there was a division of labour according to gender, with 80 per cent of both sexes conforming to type; that this was most marked among younger members and communities; that women were less active than men in the governing bodies of the kibbutzim—particularly in the spheres of economics and general policy-making; that they were severely under-represented in the most influential administrative bodies; that there were significant differences between men and women in terms of the content and standard of their higher education; and that the family was an increasingly important component of kibbutz society. They summed up their conclusions by saying: 'Attitudes towards equality have always been more egalitarian than actual behaviour has. This discrepancy causes recurrent soul-searching within the kibbutzim and federations.'⁷⁹ The conclusions which they drew from these facts caused a furore. For, in opposition to the assumptions made by virtually all those who had previously dealt with the question, whether ideologues or sociologists, Tiger and Shepher maintained that sexual differentiation stemmed from differences in the 'biogrammar' of the sexes: that they were biologically in-built, rather than the product of mental or social processes.⁸⁰

Whether as a result of this book's publication or because the accumulated results of research over the past decade had established the facts beyond dispute, from now on there was a marked change in the way the kibbutz movements dealt with the problem. The rather thin, but more or less continuous, stream of ideological discussion of the previous two decades dried up almost completely; more accurately, perhaps, it re-appeared in the reactions to Tiger and Shepher's book and in the continued research effort on the matter, most of which confirmed that the

⁷⁸ Tiger and Shepher, *Women in the Kibbutz*.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* 262–3.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* 269–81.

trends to familialism and occupational differentiation were still dominant. Much of the research from then on was interpretative, even apologetic: for acceptance of the bio-sociological thesis would mean a sea-change in both ideological attitudes and practical policies.⁸¹ Although the scholars who conducted the controversy made considerable efforts to bring it to the notice of a wide audience, the question was virtually off the agenda of the policy-makers. For some time to come, 'natural' processes were left to work themselves out, while the intellectuals discussed their significance.

EDUCATION

With the redivision of the kibbutz movements in 1951, kibbutz education crystallized into four separate structures, each controlled by its own movement, resting on a developed ideology, and involving both structural features and characteristic methods and content. Within a decade, however, there began a series of far-reaching developments which brought about fundamental changes in many of these patterns.

Structural Changes

The movements differed little in their ways of caring for children in the early years of their lives: the babies' house, the 'toddlers' group' with its *metapelet*, and the kindergarten continued to be standard features of every kibbutz.⁸² Each of the movements made constant efforts to improve the professional knowledge of those working with children and the tools at their disposal: from the mid-1950s their educational departments organized courses, study days, and conferences for child care workers at all levels.⁸³ The system still suffered from a chronic shortage of trained workers, but for most of the 1950s it seemed to be functioning satisfactorily, though still capable of improvement in detail.

However, there were some serious sources of stress. One major issue was that of the children's sleeping-quarters. By the early 1920s, the practice of children sleeping in dormitories away from their parents had become standard in the great majority of kibbutzim, and the notion of 'communal sleeping' was embedded in the educational ideology of all the kibbutz movements. Only in a few of the older kibbutzim was 'family sleeping' the norm, and they were considered to be tolerated relics of an

⁸¹ See e.g. the issue of the research journal *Hakibbutz* which centred mainly on direct and indirect critiques of Tiger and Shepherd: *Hakibbutz*, 3-4 (1976). For a similar collection in English, see Palgi *et al.*, *Sexual Equality*.

⁸² See *KM* i. 236-45, 378-82.

⁸³ Dror, 'Kibbutz Studies Curricula', 170-1.

earlier stage in kibbutz history. This situation changed in 1949, when kibbutz Geshar Haziv adopted a system of 'family sleeping' modelled on that of Degania, and started a chain reaction within its kibbutz movement, the Ihud. A number of young kibbutzim, in which immigrants from the English-speaking countries predominated, demanded that the movement legitimize the family sleeping system for pre-adolescent children. The Ihud establishment firmly resisted this demand. But by 1960, by dint of exceptional persistence, a few Ihud kibbutzim had obtained permission to make the change, and were in the process of putting it into operation; and in 1967 the Ihud declared that both systems were legitimate, though 'communal sleeping' remained the 'royal road' of the movement. Adolescent children continued to sleep in their own dormitories, despite the change for the younger age-groups.⁸⁴

At this stage both the other movements, who saw in this process a sign of ideological weakness, remained faithful to the principle of communal accommodation for children of all ages. But the example of the Ihud encouraged grassroots agitation to initiate a similar change in both the other movements. The Kibbutz Me'uhad followed suit in 1975, but the Kibbutz Artzi remained faithful to 'communal sleeping' until 1992.⁸⁵

During the whole of this period there was general agreement that any kibbutz with sufficient children should have its own primary school. In this, as in the matter of children's accommodation, the *kvutzot* of the Jordan valley, which had had a regional primary school for many years, were a tolerated anachronism. From 1953 primary schools became part of the state system: teachers were paid by the Ministry of Education, according to a generous standard which took into account that classes in kibbutzim and moshavim would necessarily be smaller than in towns.⁸⁶

The major structural differences between the kibbutz movements were at the level of secondary education. The Kibbutz Artzi continued to add to its 'educational institutions' as an increasing number of children in the younger kibbutzim reached high-school age: by 1958 there were twenty-five such schools, and by 1975 twenty-eight.⁸⁷ After the schism of 1951, the Kibbutz Me'uhad continued to advocate the policy of 'one kibbutz, one school', and the movement's central bodies reiterated this principle over the coming years. But from the beginning of the 1960s it was subject to constant erosion at high-school level as a result of the rising costs of education and the small number of pupils in the move-

⁸⁴ Ihud, *On Children's Accommodation*.

⁸⁵ Kibbutz Me'uhad, *1966 to 1976*, 107.

⁸⁶ Dror, 'Kibbutz Studies Curricula', 167.

⁸⁷ *Hedim*, 58 (July 1958), 3; Kibbutz Artzi, *From Conference to Conference*, 53.

ment's depleted kibbutzim. Gradually the regional school, which had been given the formal approval of the Ihud in 1955, became the dominant pattern in the Kibbutz Me'uhad also, and from 1967 onwards several of the regional schools began to take pupils from both these movements.⁸⁸

Content and Teaching Methods

No less important were the changes in method and content which were felt at all levels during these two decades. Primary schools in all the movements still retained a high degree of the flexibility, informality, and inventiveness which had always been their hallmark; but with the coming of state supervision teaching became more achievement-oriented, with the introduction of features such as streaming for certain subjects. Of the three aims which still informed the school curriculum—work, social solidarity, and academic achievement—the last now became of first importance, though the others were far from being neglected, and a good deal of latitude was still given to special programmes and methods of instruction.⁸⁹

In the junior high and high schools there was a gradual formalization of educational programmes, as a result both of the Ministry of Education's demand for defined syllabuses and subject-matter and of a general trend in kibbutz society: for there was an increasing demand for the encouragement of specific skills which would be of use in the kibbutz community and economy, rather than the more generalized curriculum at which educators had aimed in the 1930s and 1940s.

The devaluation of ideological thought as a result of the events of the 1950s and 1960s played a major part in this development: many of the young teachers now entering the profession saw their function as the teaching of subject-matter rather than the shaping of their pupils' outlook on life. This tendency was reinforced both by the increasing number of hired teachers and by the changes in the kibbutz community, where the younger generation was expressing tensions and doubts previously repressed. The increasing influence of the family, which now often appeared as an interest group opposed to the educational authorities, further undermined one of the basic principles of kibbutz education: the unity (more accurately, the unanimity) of the agents of socialization. In his investigation of the ways in which young people were taught about the kibbutz, Yuval Dror sums up the process in these words:

⁸⁸ Dror, 'Kibbutz Studies Curricula', 167.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

Most of the [negative] trends which had already begun [in the pre-state period] were strengthened at this time. . . . The idea that the kibbutz could be taken for granted [and therefore did not have to be taught], the concepts of the 'educating environment', and 'indirect education' . . . were superseded by the teaching of the kibbutz as a separate subject in high-school classes, rather than in its broad social context. In many kibbutzim the children's society and the educational group . . . did not function properly, as the regional structure of secondary schooling became more general. The erosion of the project and process system continued, and most high schools taught mainly according to disciplinary subjects, relying to an increasing extent on the educational programmes of the Ministry of Education, which were influenced by American curricular concepts.⁹⁰

All of these tendencies existed in each of the movements. The more rigid structure and ideological frame of mind of the Kibbutz Artzi served to check their progress for a time, but even in the relatively isolated educational institutes the subject-matter of the lessons was adapted to conform to the national curriculum, and teaching methods became more conventional. One of the most controversial changes, which had taken place in most schools by the end of the 1970s (again, despite the opposition of the educational leadership of all the movements) was the inclusion in the school programme of preparation for the national matriculation examination, which was required for university entrance.⁹¹

Thus over this period the kibbutz school became much more like the non-kibbutz school than it had been in its first flowering. But kibbutz education, in all the movements, still retained much of its former character. The primary schools, with their small classes, flexible curricula, and informal teaching methods, continued to dovetail the activities of the school with those of the kibbutz community. The high schools, despite their increasing academization, combined a broad humanistic syllabus which offered rich opportunities for artistic creativity, particularly in music and dance, with teaching oriented towards work and the love of nature. Though in its formal aspects the 'children's community' was often quite problematic, the informal nexus created within the adolescents' dormitories was a powerful factor in their social education. Above all, both the children's society and the kibbutz school system at all levels were unselective, and the needs of the weaker scholars had to be taken into account, thus reducing the danger of the social and intellectual stereotyping so often found in urban schools. A study of teaching programmes and educational methods in kibbutz high schools, published

⁹⁰ Ibid. 243.⁹¹ Ibid. 245.

in 1981, came to the conclusion that, although 70 per cent of the curricula were similar to those in town schools, the kibbutz school was characterized by informal pupil-teacher relationships and relatively flexible teaching methods which gave it a definite advantage over the urban system.⁹²

Special Education

The fact that the educational system included all the children of the kibbutz made it almost inevitable that particular concern should be exhibited for those in need of special care or attention. During these two decades there grew up a complex network of 'special education', ranging from individuals and committees in the kibbutzim to the movements' departments, clinics on a national and regional basis, and two special schools. Despite frequent complaints that these services were expensive for a struggling agricultural community, there was no real dissent from the principle that the kibbutz community must provide the best possible treatment for children with disabilities.⁹³

Higher Education and Extended Adolescence

All of the activities mentioned in this section required a great many trained personnel, ranging from the *metapelet* or babies' nurse to the expert in special education and youth leaders and teachers at every level. The kibbutz movements invested considerable resources in providing training facilities. The first kibbutz teachers' training college had been founded in Tel Aviv in 1940, under the influence of the Kibbutz Me'uhad.⁹⁴ It served all the movements until the political tensions and splits of the 1950s. After a number of false starts, by 1953 each of the movements had its own college: the Kibbutz Artzi at Oranim, close to Haifa; the Kibbutz Me'uhad in Tel Aviv; and the Ihud in Beit Berl, close to Kfar Saba.⁹⁵ By the mid-1960s, when the ideological rift was no longer dominant, the training colleges had come under the aegis of the Federation of Kibbutz Movements, and the students' choice was mainly

⁹² Ben-Peretz and Lavi, *Trends and Changes*.

⁹³ On the school at Giv'at Haim, founded in 1957, see Shafir, 'On the Way to the Hill'.

⁹⁴ See *KM* i. 381.

⁹⁵ This division was not only the expression of each movement's desire to control its own manpower in this very sensitive area; it also reflected deep ideological differences. For instance, for many years the teaching of biology and history in Oranim and the Tel Aviv seminar was strongly influenced by Marxist doctrines which were anathema to the educational establishment of the Ihud.

based on geographical rather than doctrinal considerations. Training of high-school teachers was concentrated in Tel Aviv and Oranim, and both institutions made great efforts to raise their academic standards in order to compete with the universities, which were attracting many of the potential kibbutz teachers. In 1976 Oranim reached an agreement with the University of Haifa which enabled it to give a BA as well as a high-school teacher's certificate; and the Tel Aviv college later reached a similar arrangement with Tel Aviv University.⁹⁶

The formalization of studies in the upper age-ranges of the schools led them to become increasingly academic, a process which continually reinforced itself as the teachers it produced tended to specialize in the academic subjects they had studied at college. At the same time, however, each of the training colleges developed programmes suited to other sectors of the kibbutz educational system: courses for primary school and kindergarten teachers, for *metaplot*, and for experts in special education; institutes for the study of music, the visual arts, and dance; in-service training for teachers at all levels; and centres for the treatment of family problems and problematic children. The professional standards of all these programmes rose steadily, in accordance with the demands of the kibbutzim and the academic community, but were continuously remodelled in an attempt to meet changing needs. At the same time, economic realities forced all the training colleges to open their gates to students from outside the kibbutz, and the proportion of non-kibbutz trainees in the student body increased constantly.

Until the late 1960s post-secondary studies for kibbutz members usually meant specialized training for a task in agriculture, industry, or education. The decision to send a member to study was often preceded by long and difficult discussions, in which the needs of the kibbutz, the damage done by the person's absence from the work roster, and the cost of the studies were taken into consideration. As kibbutz society became more prosperous and the number of kibbutz-born children increased, there was a widespread demand to view further education as an extension of the twelve years of education provided within the system. By 1967 many kibbutzim had already made decisions in this spirit: the conference of the Ihud confirmed this approach as movement policy, and the other movements soon followed suit. At this point there were about 400 kibbutz members studying in institutes of higher education. By 1975 this number had increased to some 1,800. In that year 6 per cent of working days in the kibbutz system were allocated to higher studies, and this

⁹⁶ Dror, 'Kibbutz Studies Curricula', 254.

proportion remained more or less standard in the following years. The process described by one scholar as the educational revolution was well under way.⁹⁷

Many of these students were relatively senior kibbutz members. Since the 1970s the youth movements had encouraged their graduates to forgo higher studies for the sake of the kibbutz, and many of them were now eager to exploit the opportunities presented by the new situation. The kibbutz establishment was anxious to increase the proportion of 'functional' studies—those which suited the economic and social needs of the system—as much as possible, and was quite successful in doing so: at the Ruppin Institute, founded and administered by a department of the Histadrut, a very wide variety of subjects was taught, ranging from short technical courses for workers in agricultural and service branches to academic studies in economics and business administration. These courses were planned in conjunction with the kibbutz movements, and most of their students were kibbutz members. The same applied to the special degree of the agricultural faculty of the Hebrew University, at Rehovot. Furthermore, each of the kibbutz movements had its own ideological seminary, offering a wide range of subjects such as history, political theory, and current affairs at different levels, from short courses of a few weeks' length to two years of study at university level.

On the other hand, there was a marked tendency among the kibbutz-born to demand 'self-fulfilment' in their studies, with no regard for the interests of the kibbutz, and discussions on students' priorities added to already existing tensions between the generations. But the potential students' demands to choose their own course of studies were irresistible.⁹⁸ It was already possible to foresee a day in which the great majority of kibbutz members would be university graduates, or the equivalent, but in subjects which were not necessarily relevant to the day-to-day business of living. The kibbutz and its members were likely to have to face some hard choices: for the member, between continued membership of the kibbutz and advancement in a particular field of work or study; for the kibbutz, between graduate unemployment or underemployment and remodelling of the economy in order to accommodate the skills and desires of its young members.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Leviatan, 'Higher Education'.

⁹⁸ By 1979 more than half the kibbutz students said that they had themselves chosen their course of study, without prompting from the kibbutz authorities; and this proportion grew over the coming years. *Ibid.* 70.

⁹⁹ Gamson and Palgi, 'The "Over-Educated" Kibbutz'.

The addition of a three-year period of study meant an important change in the accepted course of life of the kibbutz-born. A young man or woman who graduated from high school at the age of 18 was encouraged to spend an 'extra year of service' in a young kibbutz, working in a youth movement, or doing social work in an underprivileged community. Military service was three years for men, two for women; but many spent a further six to eighteen months in the armed services (with the backing of their kibbutz) in special units or assignments. They were then required to spend a 'home year' in the kibbutz, in order to begin to appreciate what it meant to live there as adults. By the end of the 1970s it was becoming standard practice for the majority to spend some time in town after their year at home, earning money to finance a tour abroad in Europe, the Americas, or the Far East—a period known as a year's leave, but which sometimes lasted two years or even more. This would usually be followed by a university course; and only at this point was there any real pressure on the young man or woman to decide whether their future was to be in the kibbutz. It is, then, no wonder that collective acceptance of complete cohorts as kibbutz members became a thing of the past: kibbutz-born candidates were accepted for membership when they were ready to apply. Nor is it surprising that educators and others began to speak of 'extended adolescence', or 'the moratorial years'—a period during which young people were under no obligation to make binding decisions about their future until an age which varied from 24 to 30.¹⁰⁰

RESEARCH AND THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

Although a number of analyses of kibbutz society in English, German, and Hebrew had appeared in the 1940s, the central stream of sociological research on kibbutz society was initiated with the work of Yonina Talmon-Garber in the late 1950s.¹⁰¹ Using modern empirical methods, she investigated topics such as the relationship between family and community, social differentiation, and ageing (although her sample 'old people' were in their fifties), and invented the triple classification of kibbutz communities—as *Bund*, community, or organization—which has been used by countless sociologists ever since. She herself was not a kibbutz member, but her work was supported by the kibbutz movements. After her untimely death in 1966 it was carried on in the framework of the

¹⁰⁰ Dar, 'Youth in the Kibbutz'.

¹⁰¹ The bulk of her research was published, in English, in Talmon-Garber, *Family and Community*.

Institute for Kibbutz Studies.¹⁰² Under the guidance of Menahem Rosner of kibbutz Reshafim, Uri Leviatan of Ein Hamifratz, and Joseph Shepher of Kfar Hahoshesh, the Institute undertook a number of large-scale projects: primarily, that on the second generation, mentioned on p. 274, and an investigation of the motivation of those who joined—and left—the kibbutz through the Nahal.¹⁰³ The Institute continued to work on a variety of topics such as problems of direct democracy, the organization of consumption, the role of the family, and equality between the sexes. Many of its publications are referred to in earlier sections of this chapter. Oranim's Institute for Research into Kibbutz Education, founded in 1964, produced a small but steady stream of publications, mainly concentrating on child care and primary-school education. The 1960s and 1970s also saw the beginnings of the critical history of the kibbutz movement, after many years during which historical writing had mainly consisted of personal reminiscences, factual chronicles, or tendentious narratives.¹⁰⁴ Yad Tabenkin, the research institution of the Kibbutz Me'uhad (later, the UKM), concentrated mainly on historical and political research, though it later extended its field considerably.

The many attractions of the kibbutz as an object of research quickly became evident to non-Israeli scholars. Melvyn E. Spiro used anthropological methods for a study based mainly on kibbutz Beit Alpha in two books which became best-sellers, and were the main source of information about kibbutz society for English-speaking readers for a generation.¹⁰⁵ More than a decade later, Bruno Bettelheim described the educational system in Ramat Yohanan in psychoanalytical terms.¹⁰⁶ Spiro came to the conclusion, based on a stringent use of anthropological terminology, that the kibbutz had abolished the nuclear family. Bettelheim's observations—or his theory¹⁰⁷—led him to agree and to approve, even though he had a great many criticisms of the kibbutz system, which he believed led to mediocrity and even the creation of a 'death-wish'.

Each of these books aroused a great deal of criticism for being, as I

¹⁰² At first at Giv'at Haviva, the seminary of the Kibbutz Artzi, from 1967 as a joint project of the Kibbutz Artzi and the Ihud, and shortly afterwards under the auspices of the University of Haifa. Ihud, *Aims and Deeds*, 91–4.

¹⁰³ Rosner *et al.*, *The Second Generation*; Atid *et al.*, *Absorption of Nahal Groups*.

¹⁰⁴ The major historical works published in this period were: Ben-Avram, *Hever Hakvutzo*; Margalit, *Hashomer Hatzair*; Shapira, 'The Dream and its Shattering'; Near, 'The Kibbutz and the Outside World'.

¹⁰⁵ Spiro, *Kibbutz: Venture in Utopia*; *id.*, *Children of the Kibbutz*.

¹⁰⁶ Bettelheim, *Children of the Dream*.

¹⁰⁷ As propounded in his article, 'Does Communal Education Work? The Case of the Kibbutz', written before he had been to Israel.

have expressed it elsewhere, 'strong on insight, but short on evidence'.¹⁰⁸ The discerning non-Israeli reader could supplement them by studying a number of other works, particularly about education, which took less extreme theoretical views.¹⁰⁹ But these books had a positive effect similar to that of Tiger and Shepher: they stimulated the production of a great many other works, in Hebrew and in English, which tried to refute or corroborate their arguments by more firmly based empirical investigation.

Simultaneously, a good deal of work in other fields was being done, and resulted in a mass of published material. Bibliographies of research publications dating from the end of the 1970s show 585 items in Hebrew and 951 in English.¹¹⁰ Of these, by far the greatest number (384 in English, 96 in Hebrew) deal with education, child-rearing and the family; 234 in English and 212 in Hebrew with economics, work problems, industry, and agriculture; 85 in English and 65 in Hebrew with sexual equality; and 26 in English and 100 in Hebrew with questions of ageing.¹¹¹ It is impossible to sum up these researches and their subjects in the compass of this book. Suffice it to say that the kibbutz was well on the way to becoming one of the most researched societies in the world. Indeed, so tempting were the conditions of research in the kibbutz, with its captive subject population, its tradition of hospitality, and its clearly defined lines of social behaviour—and now with its easily accessible research literature—that kibbutz secretaries were asked to channel any request for further investigations through the central research institutes, in order to reduce their nuisance factor.

Much of the work on the economics of the kibbutz was conducted at the Ruppin Institute, which also became one of the centres of applied sociological theory, or organizational development as it was often called at the time. Techniques derived from this theory began to spread from the mid-1960s, and were stimulated further by the visits to Israel of a number of noted experts in the field. They particularly appealed to a number of young men and women, several of them connected with the *Shdemot* group, who saw in them a way of combating the rigid organization of the modern kibbutz, and returning to something resembling the spontaneous interrelationships of an earlier stage in kibbutz

¹⁰⁸ Near, 'Bettelheim'.

¹⁰⁹ e.g. Neubauer, *Children in Collectives*; Rabin, *Growing Up in the Kibbutz*; Rabin and Hazan, *Collective Education in the Kibbutz*.

¹¹⁰ Shur, *The Kibbutz in Research*; id., *The Kibbutz: A Bibliography*. Not all of the items enumerated in these lists are, strictly speaking, research works, nor are they chronologically parallel. But the general picture they give is quite clear.

¹¹¹ Many of these categories, taken from the author's index, overlap.

history.¹¹² By the end of the 1970s there was a team in each of the kibbutz movements which used techniques of intervention in social and managerial processes in order to improve the efficiency and sensitivity of management. In the early stages of their work they attempted to change the behavioural practices of complete kibbutz communities, with little permanent success; but over the years they developed techniques of work with particular groups, committees, and work branches with some very positive results, especially in the area of industrial management.¹¹³ One side-effect of their work was the development of a special course for social workers in kibbutzim at the Ruppin Institute. By the end of the 1970s, such teams were an accepted part of the work of the kibbutz movements.¹¹⁴ The kibbutzim of the 1970s, with their officially initiated group dynamics and sponsored social intervention, were a far cry from the spontaneous communities of fifty years earlier.

SEVENTEEN FAT YEARS

In 1960 the half-century of the kibbutz movement was celebrated with a spate of public events: a mass rally in Degania with speeches from the most eminent leaders of the nation; the publication of a photographic album, and a volume of essays on various aspects of kibbutz ideology; poems, newspaper articles, and innumerable speeches; and a commemorative postage stamp. Over the next fifteen years this self-congratulatory tone became the norm. It looked as though the kibbutzim had reached a state of stability and steady progress. Their economic situation seemed sound, and they were generally believed to form one of the most efficient sectors of the economy, producing a significantly greater proportion of export goods, added value, and industrial produce than their share in the population might warrant. They were still playing a useful, though no longer dominant, part in the areas which had always been their particular concern: defence, through the Nahal and the special role of kibbutz-born youngsters in the IDF, and settlement in areas such as the Jordan valley and northern Sinai and, in the case of the religious kibbutzim, on the West Bank of the Jordan. In terms of manpower, it seemed as though the recruitment of members from the urban sector—as families, through the Nahal and Youth Aliya, and as partners of kibbutz-born members—was

¹¹² These techniques were introduced to the readers of *Shdemot* in 1970 in two articles: Tannenbaum, 'Group Work and Human Relations in the Kibbutz'; Bar, 'From the World of the T-Group'.

¹¹³ Kibbutz Me'uhad, 1966 to 1976, 113. Information on methods of trial and error: interview by the author with Dov Darom and Amram Hayisra'eli, Feb. 1994.

¹¹⁴ Kibbutz Me'uhad, 1966 to 1976, 115.

combining with the absorption of the kibbutz-born to ensure a steady demographic pattern, without the fluctuations of earlier periods. Politically, the kibbutz movements were playing their traditional roles: providing political activists and various types of support for the labour leadership; protecting their interests at levels ranging from ministerial office and central leadership of the Histadrut to local government; and, occasionally, influencing government policy by party activity or through their representatives in high places. During this period, too, the international reputation of the kibbutz reached its height. In 1945 Martin Buber had written of the kibbutz as a possible alternative to the dominant forms of contemporary society—capitalism and totalitarian Communism—and this view was elaborated in his book *Paths in Utopia*, which appeared in English in 1949 and was frequently republished thereafter. Over the coming years much was written, in many languages, about the universal significance of the kibbutz.¹¹⁵ The word 'kibbutz' became an internationally recognized term, and kibbutz-style communities, several of them called kibbutzim, were set up in many parts of the world, from Japan to the USA.¹¹⁶

The general feeling in the kibbutz movement on the eve of the electoral upheaval of 1977 was of cautious optimism verging on complacency. True, it was clear that there were many serious problems to be tackled: there were always ongoing economic and political difficulties; the existence of hired labour and of private means raised fundamental and unsolved questions; and the proportion of kibbutz-born youngsters leaving the kibbutz was beginning to cause considerable disquiet. But, as the kibbutz movement approached its seventieth year, the accepted wisdom of the time tended to emphasize its achievements rather than speculate on the possibility of new crises.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ e.g. Buber, *Cooperative Village*; id., *Paths in Utopia*. For a similar evaluation, see Braunthal, *Millennium*, ch. 23. Two works by kibbutz authors on this theme are Barzel, *Categories*, and Ring, *Kibbutz and the Future*.

¹¹⁶ There have been kibbutz-type communities in Japan since 1962, and many contemporary communities in North America have used the kibbutz as a model: Kusakari *et al.*, *Communes of Japan; Communities Directory*. Even before the publication of *Paths in Utopia*, the kibbutz figured largely in Arthur Koestler's *Thieves in the Night* (1946). However, the word 'kibbutz' appeared in the 1964 edition of the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, but not in the edition of 1951. It can be said to have been admitted to the English language canon with an article in the *Times* ('Old Spirit Fades in Kibbutzim', 15 Oct. 1960, p. 5), and the French with an entry in the 1962 *Larousse* (iv. 473). In the US, *kevutzah* appeared in *Webster's International Dictionary* as early as 1934, and both 'kibbutz' and 'kvutza' in the 1961 edition.

¹¹⁷ For a statement of this general outlook, still little influenced by the changes of the intervening years, see Near, 'Authenticity and Adaptability'.

I I

Achievement and Crisis

SEVEN DECADES—SEVEN CRISES

IF those who influenced public opinion had attempted to extrapolate from past experience, they might have been rather less optimistic about the future prospects of the kibbutz than the closing words of the previous chapter seem to warrant. For the subtitle of this volume—‘Crisis and Achievement’—could well be applied to the whole course of kibbutz history, which can be described as a series of crises punctuated by periods of recovery and progress.

The term ‘crisis’ here refers to a state of mind rather than a state of affairs: a feeling, whether of the rank and file or of the leadership, that the whole kibbutz enterprise is in danger of decline, perhaps even of disintegration. It can, perhaps, best be appraised by the frequency with which the term has been used at any given period by the members themselves. By this criterion there have been seven periods during the movement’s first seventy years which qualify for this characterization.

The establishment of the first moshavim in 1921 led to a crisis of faith and the loss of a number of central figures in Degania, followed by the transfer of the weight of the Zionist movement’s support to the moshav.¹ This was balanced by reinforcements from the growing pioneering movements of the Diaspora, which continued even through the slump of 1925–7. The stresses of that period led to the second crisis: the protracted social and political controversies of the first nationwide kibbutz movement, *Gedud Ha’avoda*, which ended with the emigration to the USSR of some of its leading figures, and its elimination as a leading force in the labour movement. But in that same year the organizational framework of the kibbutz movements and their connection with the European youth movements was crystallized, and became the basis for a steady accretion of strength over the next twelve years.²

However, even this period, which saw an immense growth in the numbers, economic strength, and prestige of the kibbutz movement, was not without major crises. Each year between 1932 and 1935 about a third of the new immigrants who had been educated on the training farms

¹ *KM* i. 69, 94–6.

² *KM*, vol. i, chs. 2–4; Near, *Kibbutz and Society*, ch. 7.

of the youth movements left the kibbutzim very soon after their arrival in the country. This highlighted the difficulty of competing with the relative prosperity of the towns, and resulted in a widespread feeling of crisis—the third in my count. It also led, directly and indirectly, to the political tensions of the mid- and late 1930s, and the hardening of the position of the two major kibbutz movements as oppositionist elements within the labour movement.³

The tower and stockade period (1936–9) strengthened the kibbutz movement in terms of prestige, self-confidence, public support, and manpower. But those years can also be seen as a protracted crisis, expressed in the tensions of everyday life, the loss of life and destruction of property, and uncertainty as to what the future would bring.⁴ This also applies, though to a lesser degree, to the Second World War period and the following three years: the political differences which had come to the fore from the mid-1930s onwards deepened and widened as the conflicts over the future of the Yishuv and the appropriate means for the struggle against the British became ever more urgent. None the less, in most respects this was a period of high morale and great achievement: from 1944 onwards the rate of new kibbutz settlement increased to an unprecedented degree, and the size of the kibbutz population relative to the rest of the Yishuv grew to a proportion that was never to be equalled.⁵

Parallel to all these political and social events were a number of economic developments: the relative prosperity of the mid-1930s was followed, in the kibbutzim as in the Yishuv as a whole, by five years of depression and then, from 1941, by a revival. Though in many cases these vicissitudes influenced and were influenced by the main events of the period, they were far from being congruent with them: for instance, between 1932 and 1935 the kibbutzim shared in the general economic prosperity of the Yishuv, but were engaged in a constant struggle to prevent large-scale desertion of their members, and to maintain their power and status; and their recovery during the tower and stockade period neither resulted from economic success nor brought it about.⁶

This pattern of crisis, recovery, and further crisis continued after the establishment of the State of Israel. With the end of the War of

³ *KM* i. 208–9; Near, *Kibbutz and Society*, chs. 11 and 13.

⁴ *KM*, vol. i, ch. 9. This period, when the situation of the kibbutzim was seen to be part of the critical situation of the Yishuv and the Jewish people as a whole, is the only possible exception to the definition of the term 'crisis' given above.

⁵ See above, Chs. 3 and 4.

⁶ *KM* i. 178–84, 336–42.

Independence in 1949 the change in the status of the kibbutz and uncertainty as to its future aims led to a deep-seated crisis of faith; and this was far from being over when the controversies centred on attitudes to the Soviet Union emerged as a central political issue—an issue which split the Kibbutz Me'uhad in 1951, and came close to splitting the Kibbutz Artzi: thus, one fundamental crisis erupted while the previous one was still at its height.⁷ This was followed by economic recovery, accompanied by the belief that the major task of the kibbutzim was to promote the economic progress of the state—and, with it, their own prosperity and standard of living. Almost without realizing it—certainly without effecting a major change in their ideology which would take this into account—the kibbutzim had undergone a process of *embourgeoisement* in their relationships with the surrounding society and, to no small extent, in their social values. The result was a new sense of crisis—the seventh of these seventy years—often described within the kibbutz movement itself as a crisis of prosperity, which arose from the contrast between the pristine, and still frequently proclaimed, aims and values of the kibbutz and the very different reality.⁸

The Contract

The above analysis is rather at odds with the general picture which emerges from the narrative account in these two volumes, of a steady though gradual accretion of strength, public standing, and confidence. Throughout these seventy years the overall population of the kibbutzim grew constantly; and, despite the manifold problems mentioned here and elsewhere, only twenty-one kibbutzim out of more than 260 broke up or changed their social structure.⁹ These facts would seem to indicate that the kibbutz movement was an increasingly successful enterprise. So did the repeated feelings of crisis spring from false consciousness—perhaps as a result of preoccupation with matters not really relevant to the underlying historical trends? Or were they based on a reality not necessarily expressed in statistical terms?

An answer begins to emerge if we consider a sphere in which there was no feeling of existential crisis during this period: the economic system. The history of the kibbutz (and, no less, of the moshav) is fraught with examples of financial distress; but none of them seemed at the time to threaten the very existence of the kibbutz movement. Many of these problems resulted from the slow and inconsistent methods of

⁷ See above, Chs. 7 and 8.

⁸ See above, Ch. 10.

⁹ See Appendices 1 and 2.

payment of the settlement funds, others from mistaken planning and investment, others again from the simple fact that, especially from 1936 onwards, settlements were founded in localities poor in natural resources, which took many years to develop. There was undoubtedly also an element of uncertainty and inefficiency in the kibbutz system itself: the frequent turnover of manpower, particularly in young kibbutzim; the rotation of managers not always chosen for their economic effectiveness; difficulties in building up an accounting system, whose prestige in a labour-oriented society was low; and the lack of personal responsibility in many parts of the system. But over the years the Zionist movement and the government of Israel gave various sorts of assistance, ranging from direct long-term loans and grants to the rescheduling of debts. Leaders and rank and file alike believed financial aid to be their right, and assumed that it would be forthcoming if necessary.

There were also objective reasons for confidence that the economic system was basically sound. Kibbutz agriculture showed a steady growth in productivity from its beginnings, and this was enhanced from the 1950s onwards by its ability to adapt to new conditions: for example, by converting to export crops. This success was paralleled, and even surpassed, in the field of industry: kibbutz workers and managers displayed skill and initiative which made them a justifiably esteemed sector of the Israeli economy. Both agriculture and industry enjoyed government support ranging from the development of water resources to aid in research and development, subsidies for basic foodstuffs, and loans for industrial expansion. But, compared with other sectors which enjoyed similar advantages, the kibbutzim undoubtedly achieved remarkable successes.

The combination of the kibbutz members' skill and devotion with support from public institutions was not confined to the economic field. Without the support of the Zionist movement and, later, of the State of Israel, it is quite possible that the kibbutzim would have been no more than a handful of eccentric communities, eking out a living in a hostile or indifferent environment—like most communal societies the world over. That they were so much more than this stems from a contract between them and the Zionist/Israeli authorities, whereby they played a major part in the struggle for national objectives—primarily settlement, immigration and its absorption, and defence—and in return received various types of support. The contract was not always official or explicit, nor were the rewards consistent in character or quantity, but its existence was not in doubt. It was of first importance in three crucial matters, apart

from aid in times of financial distress: institutional backing for new settlement; support for the pioneering youth movements—including the allocation of immigrants' certificates—in the Mandatory period; and, from 1949 onwards, official support for the Nahal. Beyond these concrete expressions of support, the kibbutzim enjoyed a high degree of prestige, which also resulted from their special contribution to advancing the aims of Zionism.

Manpower: The Achilles' Heel

The terms of the contract were necessary conditions for the growth of the kibbutz movement. But they were not in themselves sufficient; for immigration certificates only have value if there are candidates for their use, and land and settlement budgets are ineffective without farmers to exploit them. Apart from military defeat or the collapse of the whole Zionist enterprise, there was one major factor which could threaten the very existence of the kibbutz. From its very first days, its Achilles' heel has been the question of manpower. No kibbutz has ever existed for more than a very short period without losing members. They become disillusioned, and leave; they die, or are killed—and in the special circumstances of kibbutz history, this last amounted to no small number. So any event which drastically reduced their population, or threatened to do so, was capable of putting their very existence in jeopardy.

By the end of the 1930s it was clear that without constant growth no kibbutz community could survive the critical two or three decades until its children began to reinforce the founding generation. Filling this gap was one of the major functions of the pioneering youth movements. So the struggle to control and strengthen them was one of the most vital interests of all the kibbutz movements. On the whole, this struggle was successful until 1948. Starting as scattered, spontaneously organized groups of pioneers, the youth movements underwent a steady process of growth and institutionalization. Most of them espoused the kibbutz idea, and they provided considerable reinforcements, though severely limited by the restrictions on immigration. In the wake of the Holocaust this source dwindled drastically, but during the 1960s significant numbers of kibbutz-born children began to enter their communities as members. Together with graduates of the Nahal and Youth Aliya, and the absorption of families from town (in Israel and abroad), this ensured the continued growth of the kibbutz population.

In this, the most vulnerable aspect of kibbutz society, there was, there-

fore, a sound basis for survival and growth, which was weakened but not destroyed by the succession of threats to its existence. But the kibbutz is a voluntary and selective society: demographic growth is the result not only of favourable historical circumstances, but also of the desires and strength of will of its members, actual and potential; and these, in their turn, are closely tied up with their social, moral, and political convictions. It is therefore no accident that in the great majority of cases where the kibbutz movement has experienced a sense of crisis the reasons have been primarily ideological—widespread loss of faith in the kibbutz idea—or political, rooted in struggles between factions and parties.¹⁰ Such crises threatened not only to lead to massive demoralization and desertion but to impair the educational effectiveness of the main sources of manpower—the pioneering youth movements and, from the 1960s onwards, the education system of the kibbutzim. The recurrent sense of crisis was rooted in the realities of kibbutz history.

SOURCES OF STRENGTH

It is possible to analyse all of these crises simply as consequences of one basic fact: the kibbutz has never been—indeed, its members have never wanted it to be—an isolated community: it has been influenced deeply, at every stage of its existence, by historical trends and events in the Yishuv, the Jewish people, and the world at large. The crisis of the early 1920s was to a great extent the result of the changes in the Yishuv at the beginning of the Third Aliya, and the splits in *Gedud Ha'avoda* of the Fourth. The high attrition rate of the 1930s was directly related to the increasing distress of European Jewry. And it is superfluous to dwell on the roots of the post-state crises in the Holocaust and the development of the state. In each of these cases the kibbutzim reacted as best they could to events which they did nothing to shape.

How was it, then, that the basic factor of constant demographic growth survived these repeated and, in the main, unavoidable setbacks? A comparison with the moshav, which existed side by side with the kibbutz and served the nation in similar ways, will throw some light on this question.

¹⁰ In these terms, the crisis of 1921, the post-state crisis, and the crisis of prosperity in the 1970s were ideological, and those of 1927 and 1951–4 political; that of 1932–5 was the direct result of 'manpower bleeding' (Sheaffer, 'Organizational Decline', 712), whose causes were also basically ideological; while that of 1936–9 sprang from the military situation of the kibbutzim.

Kibbutz and Moshav

The moshavim settled in unhealthy, undeveloped, and often dangerous areas, and developed a prosperous modern agricultural economy, as did the kibbutzim. They too were based on the principle of 'self-labour', interpreted in the first instance as abstention from the employment of Arab workers and, at a later stage, as basing the economy of the farm on the work of the individual farmer and his family alone. In the tower and stockade period a number of moshavim were set up in front-line areas, under conditions similar to those of the kibbutzim. And they, too, absorbed new immigrants, even if their lack of direct contact with the youth movements limited their achievements in this sphere. All this applies equally to the pre- and post-state period. After 1948 the moshavim surpassed the kibbutzim in what was generally perceived to be a supremely important national objective, the absorption of immigrants—though more by the establishment of new settlements than by accepting them into their own communities—and many of their sons and daughters played a prominent part in smoothing the absorption process in immigrants' moshavim.

In exchange for all this, they received support of the same sort as that given to the kibbutzim. From the foundation of the first moshav, Nahalal, in 1921 until 1929 they received priority in allocation of land and housing, mainly because of the doubts of the Zionist authorities as to the kibbutzim's chance of survival; and the leaders of the Jewish Agency, which determined settlement policy from 1930 onwards, continued this policy. This situation changed in 1935, when the labour movement became the leading force in the Zionist movement and assumed control of the Jewish Agency. The preference given to kibbutzim as against moshavim from 1936 to 1948 was partly due to this factor, partly to the predilections of certain influential figures in the settlement institutions and the Histadrut (notably Avraham Hartzfeld), and partly to the belief, on the whole borne out by experience, that the kibbutz community was more capable than the moshav of standing up to the double strain of settlement and defence. After 1948, and the relative failure of the kibbutzim to absorb new immigrants, the weight of official support was again transferred to the moshavim.

Thus the kibbutzim were given priority over the moshavim during less than a quarter of their common existence—twelve years out of more than fifty. None the less, until 1948 they had a great deal more manpower, prestige, and public influence than the moshavim. Despite the

massive expansion of the moshavim during the early years of statehood, by 1977 the kibbutzim were not far behind them numerically.¹¹ They outstripped them in several fields, such as productivity, education, and cultural life. And, although there were considerable differences in economic success and standards of living between kibbutzim, they were not afflicted with pockets of poverty and cultural backwardness as was the moshav movement.

The prime factor in the continuous growth of the kibbutz movement was, therefore, not the support it received from the Zionist and Israeli authorities; for had this been so, the moshav would have surpassed it with ease. The kibbutzim had two major advantages over the moshavim. Because of their social structure they could develop new agricultural and—particularly—industrial branches which enabled them to absorb new members, including their own children, whereas in the moshavim the number of those who could inherit their fathers' farms was strictly limited. Even more important was the fact that from a very early stage the kibbutz movements controlled the pioneering youth movements.

The moshavim suffered from a number of disadvantages in recruiting new members. From the earliest years of the kibbutz, its leaders were more dynamic than those of the moshav, and played a more prominent role in the leadership of the labour movement: none of the leaders of the moshav movement had the status or capabilities of men such as Tabenkin or Ya'ari. Moreover, the structure of the individual kibbutzim and of the kibbutz movements enabled them to free emissaries, educators, and organizers from their homes and places of work for long periods. This was not possible for the great majority of moshav members; they had to tend their farms, and many of them refused to take on public responsibilities which would compel them to be away from home for more than a very short period.

Important as they are, however, these factors alone do not explain the huge comparative success of the kibbutzim in attracting young people. The enthusiasm and devotion which marked the youth movements sprang very largely from their members' belief that in the kibbutz they would be building a new society, free from the blemishes of their parents' world and its values, and characterized by the attributes which they found attractive in youth movement life—equality and close

¹¹ At the end of 1958 the population of the moshavim (not including *moshavim shitufi'im*) was approximately 121,700, and of the kibbutzim 78,600. Twenty years later the moshavim had grown to 136,500 (an increase of about 10.8%) and the kibbutzim—including those *moshavim shitufi'im* now affiliated to the kibbutz movement—to 105,000 (an increase of 21.5%). *Statistical Abstract* (1958), table 8; (1978), table II/10.

community—no less than physical labour and the return to the soil, which were common to both kibbutz and moshav. In their eyes, the social values of the moshav were not basically different from those of Diaspora Jewry: they were based on private property, and the preservation of the 'bourgeois' family unit.

But young people were not only attracted to the kibbutz because they rejected other forms of society. If it had not had a positive appeal of its own they would not have been tempted to join it, and would certainly not have stayed in it. Living in any communal society requires a great deal of effort, even sacrifice, on the part of the individual. The system cannot work unless its members have a passion for community—an emotional investment which outweighs all the difficulties and disadvantages of life in a close-knit society. And this passion very often derives from what I have called elsewhere 'the communal experience':

A semi-mystical experience arising spontaneously from the actions and interactions of people—particularly young people—in small groups. It can be the result of working together, of singing or dancing together, of the sort of discussion in which 'soul touches soul'.¹² History also shows us that it can be the result of fighting together, in the form of *esprit de corps*. The great majority of those who undergo it feel it to be positive, significant, and worthy of repeating if possible.¹³

This concept is a major key to understanding why people live in kibbutzim and other communal societies. The youth movements did their best to foster such experiences, which were a prime factor in their educational practice. They offered not only the negative appeal of rebellion against the older generation and the society it had built, but the positive attraction of the prospect of a life with and for other people in the same group, in which such experiences would be an important component.

Although the communal experience most typically takes place during youth, it has a deep influence on the overall quality of kibbutz life, creating deep emotional bonds between the members. These bonds are seen particularly clearly at times of common rejoicing such as festivals and weddings, and of common sorrow such as illness and death: but they form the substratum of mutual relationships in almost every field of life, from communal economic enterprises to the virtually complete social security which characterizes the kibbutz community.

The leaders of the Labour Zionist movement often prided themselves on having evolved a unique type of socialism, exemplified particularly in

¹² *KM* i. 80-2.

¹³ Near, 'The Collective Experience'.

the kibbutz. Sometimes it was called 'socialism of production', as opposed to étatist socialism which emphasized public control of the means of production, and the socialism of distribution, which was mainly concerned with equality of material goods. It was also often referred to as 'socialism of realization' (*hagshama*). The word was used in a double sense: the kibbutz members realized, or put into practice, the ideals of Zionism, and they realized themselves by living in a close-knit community whose hallmarks were the communal experience and its social derivatives. Perhaps the best rendering of this twofold concept is 'personal socialism'. It was this which gave the kibbutz its special appeal for young people.

It appears, then, that the kibbutz received much of its support because of its Zionism, often from institutions and leaders with grave reservations about its socialism. But it was precisely its distinctive form of socialism which attracted the young people who were the main source of its strength.

SOURCES OF WEAKNESS: PRIVILEGES AND PENALTIES

Even during its most flourishing periods the kibbutz movement represented a small minority of the Jewish community. Despite the claims and ambitions encapsulated in such ideas as the 'kibbutz holism' described in the previous volume, by the end of the 1930s its leaders had settled for minority status—in some cases deliberately, in others through force of circumstance. Paradoxically, this resulted not only from the unfavourable historical circumstances mentioned above, but also from some of the most essential and positive features of kibbutz society.

The contract with the Zionist movement and the State of Israel was reciprocal: in return for the privileges they received, the kibbutzim paid a number of penalties, not always apparent at the time, but visible in historical perspective. In terms of my central theme, they constituted built-in limitations on demographic growth.

Agriculture

One of these limitations is hinted at in any book of Zionist history or propaganda. 'Making the desert bloom', in the well-worn phrase, is hard work. Kibbutz members paid—and still pay—a high price in terms of sweat, uncertainty in face of the vicissitudes of nature and the market, and distance from the centres of civilization and culture. True, for those

who choose this way of life it has many compensations, such as proximity to nature, the joy of creative work in a communal framework, and the satisfaction of independent cultural activity. But membership of the kibbutzim—and, no less, the moshavim—has always been restricted not only by economic or political factors, but because relatively few people (in particular, relatively few Jews; for Jewish culture and tradition in the Diaspora have been predominantly urban) are attracted by this sort of life.¹⁴

Thus, the emphasis on agriculture, one of the main factors which ensured public and institutional support for the kibbutz movement, tended to limit its possibilities of growth. This emphasis was also an important factor in the relative failure to achieve occupational equality between men and women. Reading the Seneca Falls manifesto, the classic statement of aims of the US feminist movement, one can easily translate it into Israeli terms: women should be given the opportunity to adopt the professions monopolized by men. But in the American case they were talking about law, accountancy, teaching; in the Israeli case, about ploughing, threshing, and other physically demanding tasks. There is a world of difference. And many of the women who, throughout these seventy years and later, have urged their husbands to leave the kibbutz in order to afford them a chance of a more congenial life- and work-style were very conscious of that fact.

The Youth Movement Connection

The fact that the kibbutzim recruited mainly from the youth movements involved a similar contradiction. Their dedication to the Zionist cause gained them the privilege of selecting a high proportion of working-class immigrants, and the ideals and methods of the youth movements attracted youngsters of very high quality. But, as I emphasized in Volume I, though these movements provided a considerable proportion of the settlers in Palestine/Israel, even at the time of their maximum influence they comprised fewer than 10 per cent of the relevant age-group in the communities in which they worked; and this proportion became even smaller after the Holocaust and the mass immigration from the Middle Eastern countries. The reasons are not far to seek. Much-used phrases such as 'the revolt of youth' do indeed convey a general truth, that young

¹⁴ Even during the period which has gone down in the accepted historiographic version as the acme of pioneering—the Third Aliya—only about a third of the new immigrants were in fact pioneers, and the number who lived in agricultural settlements about half of that number. Ben-Avram and Near, *Third Aliyah*, chs. 1–3.

people tend to rebel against the values and way of life of the older generation. But those who express their rebellion through organized movements have always been a small minority among their peers; by far the greatest number among them find their place in the surrounding adult society after their period of rebellion. Thus it was with the pioneering youth movements: the very characteristics which were their chief attraction doomed them to remain a relatively small minority.

The symbiosis of youth movements and the kibbutz movements was fruitful in many ways. But the youth movements were inevitably deeply influenced by their immediate surroundings, whereas their graduates in the kibbutzim had their own agenda and methods of procedure rooted in the realities of Palestine/Israel. The inherent age-gap between the two groups accentuated these differences, and often led to fierce intergenerational conflicts. This is particularly noticeable in the political field: for instance, the influence of the young and often fanatical leadership on the Kibbutz Me'uhad and the Kibbutz Artzi was a potent factor in what proved to be a crucial political error—the pro-Soviet orientation which was one of the major planks in their political programme for more than two decades. The privilege of recruiting single-minded and devoted youngsters carried with it a severe penalty: the danger of internal dissension and schism.

The Post-Utopian Factor

Added to these factors was another paradox of kibbutz history, which again resulted from one of its most attractive features: the fact that it was an intentional society, created in the light of an ideal and, in no small measure, embodying that ideal. For this reason, the kibbutz is often called a utopian society. But it would be better to describe it as post-utopian.¹⁶

After a very short period at the beginning of their existence, when it seems (perhaps rightly) that they have realized their ideal, all intentional communities, including the kibbutz, become post-utopian societies. Their members are constantly faced with the contrast between their pristine vision and the hard, contradictory, non-ideal realities of the present. This leads to a dialectical process. The utopian dream central to any version of the communal idea is both a rejection of the values of individualist and competitive society and an attempt to create an alternative lifestyle. Those who live within that lifestyle can see for themselves that

¹⁶ Near, 'Utopian and Post-Utopian Thought'.

it has quite considerable disadvantages: among others, restrictions on individual freedom, the gossip and tension in interpersonal relations which are the obverse of a vibrant communal life, and the economic difficulties of a small, struggling community.

In the case of the kibbutz, the central core of members saw these phenomena as the price to be paid for the positive features of their way of life. But others reacted to them just as negatively as they had to the reality against which they had once rebelled. Some underwent a process of 'internal emigration': though they continued to be members, they were basically dissatisfied with the kibbutz way of life and, usually, took little part in communal activities. Others proffered an alternative utopian vision, an amended or drastically revised version of the original. But the great majority of the disillusioned rejected the whole enterprise, and left the kibbutz. The aspiration to create an ideal society was a central feature of kibbutz thought from its very beginning, and acquiescence in these 'social experiments' came to be part of the Zionist contract. But this very aspiration bore with it the threat of rejection, tended to bring about changes which were far from the founders' original intentions, and constituted another built-in factor in limiting the kibbutz movement's possibilities of growth.

ÉLITISM AND ITS DISCONTENTS

The common assumption of all the above arguments is that some measure of demographic growth is essential to the survival and successful functioning of the kibbutz. Over the years even those kibbutzim which believed most firmly in the virtue of smallness—and its main ideological advocate, Hever Hakvutzot—had adopted this view. But, equally, all were reconciled to the fact that, at any rate in the foreseeable future, the kibbutzim would remain in the minority. So the question of their relationship to the Yishuv and the State of Israel was of paramount importance.

The fact that the kibbutz movement has always comprised a minority has enabled its members to create a society according to their ideals, with relatively few compromises and a high level of devotion and understanding. Nor has it been an unalloyed disadvantage that many people left the kibbutzim: a high proportion of those who passed through them, as members of the youth movements or in their maturity, were deeply affected by the experience. In the political field, for instance, many of the urban supporters of Mapam and its predecessors were (and still are)

former kibbutz members. And the kibbutzim made an important, though often unwilling, contribution to the wider society through the education and acclimatization of tens of thousands of men and women who left the kibbutz, including a very high proportion of moshav members in the pre-state period.

In a sense, these phenomena constitute variants of the doctrine adopted by the small *kvutzot* to explain their function in the wider society: the view of the *kvutza* as an ideal community, influencing by its example, or 'radiating values'. But this was not always so. Very often disillusion with the kibbutz system led to hostility, and the denial of its claims to élite status. In the political field one example among many is the reaction of party activists, many of them former kibbutz members, to the Kibbutz Me'uhad's aspirations to leadership within Mapai at the 1938 Rehovot conference—a reaction which succeeded in frustrating those aspirations.¹⁶ And the leadership role assumed by kibbutz-born soldiers in the IDF tended to reinforce their social isolation, and alienate them from the less privileged majority. Here, as elsewhere, privilege and penalty went hand in hand.

None the less, there was little dissent from the assumption that, particularly if the kibbutz movement was doomed to minority status, it had to participate actively in political life both in order to protect its interests and in order to influence the society around it.

Politics

Politics has always played an important part in the life of the kibbutz movement. The close fit between the theory and practice of the kibbutz and the principles of constructive Zionism accepted by the major parties in the labour movement ensured their backing in the executive bodies of the Histadrut, the Zionist movement, and the State of Israel. The kibbutz movement saw itself, and was seen by the leaders of the Yishuv and the state, as a serving élite which was deserving of support in the political sphere as in many others.

From a very early stage, however, the leaders of the kibbutz movement aimed not merely to give passive support to the leadership of the labour movement, but to play an active role in shaping its policies. This took several forms: personal participation in the leadership of the parties and the Histadrut, at the local and national level; voting *en bloc* for their governing institutions (Gedud Ha'avoda, Kibbutz Artzi); and the

¹⁶ Kanari, *Hakibbutz Hameuchad*, 205–9.

creation of separate bodies—movements (Hashomer Hatzair), factions within larger parties (Kibbutz Me'uhad), or kibbutz-controlled parties (Ahdut Ha'avoda, Mapam). As long as the kibbutz was seen to be executing widely agreed policies, each of these forms of organization was able to act as an effective pressure group. Their record as policy-makers is, however, much more debatable.

The significance of the conflict between the Histadrut and Gedud Ha'avoda was not only that it made the labour leaders aware of the dangers of Communist influence. It established the sovereignty of the Histadrut over its component parts, including the kibbutz movements, but also made it clear that any attempt to prevent a kibbutz movement from promoting a political programme of its own was doomed to failure.¹⁷ Moreover, the fact that a whole community, including its property, was divided on political grounds proved to be a precedent for similar solutions of ideological conflicts, and made for a political unanimity which was sometimes more apparent than real, even in those communities which did not accept the principle of ideological collectivism.¹⁸ Outside the kibbutz movements, too, support by national and Histadrut agencies for politically homogeneous neighbourhoods became standard practice in the years to come.¹⁹

Except for a very short period, Hever Hakvutzot and the Ihud saw themselves as part of the Mapai/Labour establishment, and their political activities were mainly devoted to furthering its interests, participating in its deliberations as faithful members, and ensuring that it did not neglect the interests of the kibbutzim. The other two movements, however, were in opposition to the Yishuv leadership from a very early stage. As we have seen, all of the kibbutz movements were over-represented in the political institutions of the Yishuv and the state, sometimes by as much as a factor of four, and it seems that the tactics of separate organization paid off better than 'working from within'.²⁰ But the oppositionist movements were not necessarily thereby more effective in furthering their political aims.

After 1934–5, when Tabenkin, with the support of Hashomer Hatzair, led the opposition to the Ben-Gurion–Jabotinsky agreement, concrete

¹⁷ *KM* i. 136–43.

¹⁸ For instance the opposition to Tabenkin and his policies in Ein Harod in the 1930s found its full expression only occasionally, as in the vote on the Ben-Gurion–Jabotinsky agreement. Rosolio, 'The Controversy'.

¹⁹ Kressel, *Sh'chunat Borochoy*; Ganin, *Kiryat Haim*, 51–2.

²⁰ In the 1950s and 1960s both the Kibbutz Artzi and the Kibbutz Me'uhad were far better represented than the Ihud in the Knesset and the government. See Table 9.1, above.

political achievements, either of the Kibbutz Me'uhad or the Kibbutz Artzi, are difficult to discern. They were at their most active and influential in the years between 1945 and the War of Independence. But they, like the politicians of Hever Hakvutzot, were no more than the supporting cast in a drama where the main roles were played by Mapai and the General Zionists. The fact that they were divided on the main issues negated any possibility of their forming a united opposition bloc; and when they did so, in their resistance to the establishment of the state, they were singularly unsuccessful.

From 1948 onwards, the proportion of votes given to all the labour parties gradually declined, and with them kibbutz representation in the Knesset. They were still greatly over-represented in most governments. But they, like their colleagues in the Ihud, served primarily to strengthen successive Mapai/Labour administrations.

Why was the leadership of the kibbutz movements so unsuccessful in national politics? One obvious reason is to be found in matters of policy. In Palestine/Israel, as in the whole of the Western world, the great majority of the public rejected Communism. In allying themselves with the Communist world, the Kibbutz Artzi and the majority in the Kibbutz Me'uhad forfeited a great deal of popular support, and wasted much of their strength. With hindsight it is easy enough to condemn them for what now seems to have been wilful blindness—though very many others, from Jean-Paul Sartre and Pietro Nenni to A. J. P. Taylor and Henry Wallace, made much the same mistake. But it seems likely that their relative isolation, which was in many ways a source of strength, compounded their error. Their political dialogue was conducted mainly with like-thinking and similarly educated people—often, indeed, men and women who had been educated by the leaders themselves. So it was hard to break out of ingrained patterns of thought unless they were forced to do so by brute facts such as the Prague trial. Rereading the words of many of the 'historic leadership', as Hazan, Ya'ari, Tabenkin, and their henchmen were called after forty years at the helm of their movements, one feels that they were often prisoners of their own rhetoric or intellectual brilliance. They were able to carry with them their own movements and a small sector of the public, largely composed of graduates of their kibbutzim and youth movements. Others remained unimpressed; but the political system, in which candidates for office were elected from lists compiled by the party leadership, enabled them or their nominees to maintain their positions without undergoing the litmus test of popular election.

Another reason for their relative failure lies in the quality of their leadership. Only too often, their tactical moves seem in retrospect to have been inept and short-sighted.²¹ Underlying matters of policy and ideology, however, was the fact that most kibbutz activists shared a style of thought and action which put them at a distinct disadvantage in the political arena.

This style can be assessed by comparison with that of Ben-Gurion. It has frequently been said of him that his view of public issues was first and foremost political, in the restricted sense of a struggle for power between different parties or factions. Thus in the early 1920s he saw the development of the rift within Gedud Ha'avoda as a bid by the minority (non-Zionist) parties for power within the Gedud, and ultimately within the Histadrut, and this at a time when the majority of the members were conducting a wide-ranging debate on social and economic questions, with little thought for anything else.²² Fifteen years later, from the moment that the factions within Mapai began to crystallize, he sensed the danger to his control of the party, and worked with his characteristic wholeheartedness to destroy them.

The attitude of most kibbutz members, including Tabenkin and many of his disciples, was different. In their view—more exactly, in their practice—democracy within the labour movement was less a struggle for power than an ongoing debate among like-minded people with identical, or at least similar, aims. Their model for democratic activity was the informal discussion of the kibbutz and the kibbutz movement rather than parliamentary institutions such as the Zionist Congress. Thus, with few exceptions—mainly such semi-professional politicians as Yitzhak Ben-Aharon—they did not see themselves as engaged in a struggle for power, but in a public debate. They prepared no cadre to replace those against whom they spoke, for they aimed not to oust the party leaders but to convince them. Seen in this light, the Kibbutz Me'uhad leaders' amazement and ineptitude in the face of their two major defeats (the expulsion of Faction B, and the break-up of the Palmach) are not surprising. It was not only that they were no match for Ben-Gurion in the game he was playing; in a very real sense, they were playing a quite different game. And so, too, were the politicians of the Kibbutz Artzi, who always saw themselves as a minority group, engaged in a permanent public dialogue

²¹ The Kibbutz Me'uhad's alliance with Faction B, and the split in the Kibbutz Me'uhad, which would well have been averted altogether had it been delayed for a year, spring to mind.

²² Teveth, *The Burning Ground*, chs. 15, 20; and cf. Margalit, *Commune, Society and Politics*, pt. 3.

with the Mapai/Labour Party, but hoping at best to influence policy from within a coalition with it.

It may be that this is simply one expression of a more general disposition common to most kibbutz politicians. Harold Wilson is said to have remarked of Yig'al Allon: 'He'll never make a prime minister: he's not capable of going for the jugular.' Yitzhak Ben Aharon, the doyen of kibbutz politicians, has remarked that there is an essential contradiction between kibbutz life and ways of thinking and those of the effective politician: politics involves competition, including competition for power with one's closest colleagues, whereas kibbutz life equips one primarily for co-operation: those who are mentally equipped to 'go for the jugular' are unlikely to make good kibbutz members.²³ There is, then, some truth in the cynical assertion that if a kibbutznik wants to become prime minister, his first step must be to leave the kibbutz.²⁴

In stringent political terms, therefore, none of the kibbutz movements had any great influence, except in the sense that they added to the strength of the labour movement, and concurrently furthered their own interests through this partnership. But they did achieve some political successes, though in a less tangible form than votes cast or legislation passed or blocked. In a society which was rapidly moving away from the aspiration to social justice, tolerance, and co-operation and towards a social order based on competition and the struggle for affluence, they strove to translate the values of the kibbutz into political terms applicable to the broader society. Their political and educational work kept these issues alive within the mainstream of Israeli politics. From among those influenced by their activities and, in particular, those of their youth movements, there emerged a number of small 'protest' parties in the 1960s, and the much broader and more influential 'Peace Now' in the 1970s and after. And the social philosophy of a very high proportion of politicians in the Labour Party has been deeply influenced by their past in the kibbutz or one of its youth movements.²⁵

Kibbutz Socialism and its Limits

Like the Zionist movement in general, the labour movement and the

²³ Shavit, *With Ben Aharon*, 31–3. Nahman Raz, the first kibbutz-born figure to achieve some prominence in the political field, expressed a similar view in a lecture at Oranim, Mar. 1985.

²⁴ Referring to Golda Meir, Levi Eshkol, and (though he never attained office higher than defence minister) Pinhas Lavon.

²⁵ Three of many instances: Golda Meir, formerly a member of a *kvutza* at Merhavia; Yitzhak Rabin, ex-Palmachnik and son of a prominent member of Faction B; and Shimon Peres, formerly of kibbutz Alumot and a leader of the Noar Oved youth movement.

Histadrut supported the kibbutz mainly for its nation-building functions. Apart from the kibbutz movement, the Histadrut's co-operative sector, in which the workers exercised control over the economic set-up, was very small. In the other sector of the Histadrut economy, which developed a solid base during the Second World War and expanded rapidly after 1948, the economic concerns were owned by the Histadrut, but their planning and day-to-day administration were in the hands of managers appointed by the Histadrut's central bodies: a state of affairs closer to the concept of nationalization and public control than to the personal socialism of the co-operative sector.

Conceptually, therefore, there was a deep rift between the socialism of most sectors of the Histadrut and that of the kibbutz movement—a rift which often resulted in ideological and political tensions, and conflicting claims to the limited resources available for development. With the establishment of the State of Israel, the dominance of the concept of *mamlachtiut*, and the acceptance by Mapai of the idea of a mixed economy all of the co-operative sector took second place to such organizations as Solel Boneh, the huge Histadrut construction firm. Politically, too, from the mid-1930s onwards the socialism of the two major kibbutz movements hardened into opposition to Mapai and support for the Soviet Union, and became increasingly alienated from the labour leadership. Thus, even the socialist Histadrut and its Mapai leaders supported the kibbutzim less for their special brand of socialism than for their contribution to the task of nation building.

The vision of a socialist society on the model of the kibbutzim, or created with their help, receded rapidly from 1948 onwards. By the end of the 1950s Israeli society was settling into its present mould, with ethnic and class differences reinforcing each other. The fact that the kibbutz shared the growing prosperity of the country in the following decades put it somewhere in the top (mainly Ashkenazi) half of Israeli society in terms of standards of living. The contrast with the relative poverty of the neighbouring immigrant towns, many of whose inhabitants worked as hired labourers in the kibbutzim, emphasized the status of the kibbutz as part of the middle, perhaps even the upper class.

The classic remedy for this situation was absorption—if not of the first generation, then of working-class children, through the youth movements and Youth Aliya. But those prepared to accept the requirements of personal socialism were few and far between. Remedies such as social work and education in the new towns, or the volunteer work done by kibbutz youngsters in their 'year of service', were generally regarded

as little more than palliatives. And the hope that political activity might lead to a pluralistic society in which the kibbutz would have a place alongside other socialist formations was receding with the change in Israeli society and the labour movement.

Kibbutz members were well aware of the paradox in this situation: socialists, dedicated to the building of a classless society, had become part of the privileged class. It was a problem with no apparent solution.

MAY 1977

The broad consensus on Zionist aims which afforded the kibbutz movement its widespread support lasted throughout the pre-state period and well into the 1960s. But even before 1948 it had not been unanimous. The political right, the ultra-Orthodox Jews who continued the traditions of the Old Yishuv, and the various Sephardi communities were all estranged to some degree from the labour movement and, even more, from the kibbutz and its values. From the mid-1930s until 1948 all of these groups together were relatively powerless in face of the growing strength, popularity, and political success of the labour movement. From them onwards the right-wing parties increased their electoral support, and gradually formed a political alliance with the Sephardi sector, now immensely strengthened by the mass immigration of the 1950s. It was this combination of social and political protest which brought about the electoral defeat of the Labour alliance in May 1977.

In political terms this event marked the end of an era, and it had momentous consequences for the kibbutz movement. But it was no more than the culmination of tendencies in Israeli society which had been visible for a good many years before 1977. Of these, two—the alienation of the kibbutzim, in common with much of the labour movement, from the poor, mainly Sephardi, majority, and the erosion of support for the kibbutz movement as an instrument of colonization—were of special significance. All the questions and misgivings about the relationship between the kibbutz and Israeli society which had been raised so often over the previous thirty years now became more pressing than ever before.

LAWS OF CHANGE

To conclude this account of the kibbutz movement's first seventy years, I shall offer some reflections about the laws which governed the changes—

and, sometimes, the lack of change—in the internal structure and social ambience of the kibbutz community. Sometimes these developments were determined mainly by external pressures, at others by the will and decision of the members, and at others again by a combination of the two.

Spirit of Time and Spirit of Place

A detailed analysis of the diverse national and regional origins of the groups which make up kibbutz society would show that such variants influence matters on which ideology has only an indirect bearing, but which go to make up the warp and weft of kibbutz life. On the ideological level, for instance, there is no dissent from the proposition that the kibbutz is a democratic community. But the nature of this democracy—whether it is consensual or confrontational, guided by a small group of leaders or managers or by grassroots discussion and initiative—is determined by a complex web of assumptions and attitudes, many of which are acquired in childhood or youth.

The kibbutz was influenced no less by the changing *Zeitgeist* than by its members' diverse cultural background. Many of the developments discussed in the previous pages stem from the special circumstances of different periods in the history of the Yishuv and the State of Israel. Each of them left its special mark in the rate of growth of the kibbutzim, their social development, their relationship with the outside world, and more. But alongside these direct influences were others, rooted in world events. In the light of the worldwide depression of the 1930s it was natural, particularly for young people, to adopt socialism, with its promise of a new, more just, and more rationally organized world. Against this background, the kibbutz was easily seen as an ideal version of a widely accepted creed. The war years, and the division in the international socialist movement, brought the question of relationships with Communism and the Soviet Union to the fore, in Israel as in the rest of the world. Post-war relaxation and the liberalization of Western social democracy brought winds of change to the Israeli labour movement and, within it, the kibbutz. All of these developments were reflected in the changing ways of thought and action of the kibbutz leadership and, perhaps even more, of the rank-and-file members.

Ideology and Improvisation

One example of this is linked to the process which I described in Volume I as 'the ideologization of the improvised'. In the narrative presented in

this volume there are a good many examples of this phenomenon. The creation of the Palmach, for instance, was a brilliant stroke of improvisation, which was almost immediately given an ideological dimension. But the ideology was not made of whole cloth: it grew out of a range of ideas—of a 'people's militia', of the International Brigade, of Jewish self-defence in eastern Europe—which formed part of its inventors' intellectual and political background.

Many of the social innovations of the 1970s can be similarly analysed. The change in sleeping arrangements for children which began in the early 1960s was largely the result of spontaneous protest by young mothers. But it was soon given ideological backing, based on a variety of psychological and anthropological theories; and those opposed to change were not slow to advance equally cogent arguments against it. A similar dialogue took place on such matters as the organization of consumption. But, behind the ideological discourse, it is possible to discern two quite clear phenomena: in many of these discussions the opposing sides were ranged, and the matters decided in particular kibbutzim, in accordance with the national origins and the cultural predilections of the participants: those born and educated in Western democracies tended to favour more 'liberal' arrangements in education, budgeting, and other matters. And, in line with the general tendency in the Western world from the late 1960s onwards, the ideological arguments were combined with a considerable degree of pragmatism. The 'end of ideology' was affecting the kibbutz, and its increasingly pluralistic composition was leading to a corresponding pluralism in social structures and procedures.

^In a sense, the influence of the outside world on relations between the sexes has acted in the opposite direction. There was much discussion of gender-related questions during the 1950s, but at the end of that decade it seemed to have died down, and the problem was being attacked in a pragmatic fashion: it was assumed that women would work mainly in the 'service' branches, and attention was focused on increasing these branches' efficiency and status, and on lightening women's load by measures such as a reduction in their working hours. The wave of feminism in the West from the 1960s onwards was echoed in the kibbutz movement, particularly among a small group of female activists; and attention was further focused on the question with the publication of Tiger and Shepher's *Women in the Kibbutz*. At the same time, the tendency to familialism, expressed, for instance, in the controversy over the children's sleeping arrangements, became ever stronger. Thus, the effect of outside influence on this most important aspect of kibbutz life

was to heighten the influence of feminist ideology, often in conflict with the tendencies which were making themselves felt spontaneously within kibbutz society.

Education

The influence of the outside world was felt particularly in the field of education. Kibbutz education has always been reasonably successful in many of the tasks it set itself. It promoted humanistic values, a positive attitude to physical work, and caring interpersonal relationships among complete cohorts of kibbutz-born and Youth Aliya pupils and children of new families, in an environment increasingly hostile to these concepts.²⁶ But, if measured by the crude but vital criterion of the numbers remaining in the kibbutz, its accomplishments began to decline seriously during the 1970s. The reasons are complex, and some have already been mentioned: the contrast between the afterglow of the heroic period and the less heroic present; the multi-faceted influence of extended adolescence, which tended to emphasize individualistic desires and characteristics, and led to an acute shortage of competent youth leaders; the anti-collective, anti-egalitarian *Zeitgeist*, which reached the whole State of Israel, especially the young, through a myriad channels; and the tendency to reject accepted values which was engendered by the post-utopian situation of the kibbutz. Despite the changes noted in Chapter 10, kibbutz education was still consciously geared to the perpetuation of the communal ethos.²⁷ But the corrosive nature of prevailing conditions had seriously impaired its effectiveness. The kibbutz movement possessed a breadth and openness in the spheres of education and culture which most other communal movements lacked. But these characteristics carried with them the challenge and the dangers of constant contact with the outside world, and the countless ways in which it impinged on the kibbutz community—many of them unforeseen, and not a few undesirable.

However, not all the failings of kibbutz education can be attributed to the influence of the outside world. I have emphasized the importance of the 'communal experience' to the kibbutz community. In order to ensure that community's continued existence, it should also be undergone by those who will eventually be its mainstay: the younger generation. But it cannot be passed on by inheritance. Ideally, then, in order to ensure

²⁶ Ben-Peretz and Lavi, *Trends and Changes*; Wolins and Gottesman, *Group Care*.

²⁷ Dror, 'Children's Society'; Dror and Bar-Lev, 'Education for Work'.

generational continuity one would have to arrange for its repetition in every generation. And this is precisely what kibbutz educators have tried to do, by creating the 'children's society', and encouraging youth movement projects of all sorts, with special emphasis on activities which foster such experiences. But this was only partly successful. The transition from 'children's society' to adult kibbutz proved to be a selective process, much like the transition from youth movement group to kibbutz group. From the mid-1970s onwards, this trend combined with the other factors mentioned here to reduce drastically the number of young people returning to their kibbutzim after military service; and of these, no small proportion rejected or were indifferent to communal values.

In this, as in other matters, it would seem that, when the stimulus of nation-building was removed, the kibbutz developed in ways reminiscent of other communal societies throughout the world.²⁸ There seems to be a general pattern in the development of communes, from initial enthusiasm to dogged construction, and thence to loss of faith bringing dissolution or radical change within the communal society. The process can be described as generational: if the first generation manages, by dint of its faith and energy, to build up an economically viable and socially satisfying community, the second generation (whether it be composed of the founders' children or of recruits from the surrounding society) will be able to meet the challenge of maintenance, and often even to enlarge and stabilize the commune. It is with the following generation that severe problems arise; for, with the founders no longer present to advocate their world-view with force and conviction, it becomes less compelling and, frequently, open to conflicting interpretations. The results are written in the story of the American communes: with very few exceptions, the original impetus did not survive the third generation, and the communes broke up or suffered a sea-change into something often richer, but much less strange—communities which differed very little from their capitalist neighbours. By the end of the 1970s there were already worrying signs of a similar development within the kibbutzim.

Even before the drastic changes which were heralded by the elections of 1977, many forebodings about the future of the kibbutz were expressed, and even more felt but unuttered. None the less, the sum total of over seventy years of construction was positive in the extreme. From the handful of young men and women of Degania there had grown a com-

²⁸ For a more detailed development of this theme see Near, 'Communes and Kibbutzim'.

munity of communities with a unique way of life based on Jewish and universal values, a flourishing economy and a wealth of cultural creativity: not an ideal society, for those who lived in it were far from perfect, but a society whose members were consciously striving to realize their ideals, despite their own imperfections, their ambivalent relations with the society around them, and the difficulties of adjustment to a rapidly changing world. Throughout these years the kibbutz movement can be likened to a ship battered by storms from without, and threatened by dissensions among its crew. Any of these forces could have sunk it, or left it to drift without direction. The fundamental strength of the vessel, allied with aid from without, enabled it to resist the many destructive forces which beset it, take on more crew and cargo, and continue to travel to its destination.

Twenty Years On: 1977–1995

THIS account of the eighteen years which followed the accession to power of the first Begin government will of necessity be no more than a rather sketchy overview. More satisfactory treatment will have to await the opening of archives, the completion of more detailed research, and the passing of enough time for matters to be seen in historical perspective.

POLITICS AND WAR

In 1977 Israel's political complexion changed radically with the electoral victory of the Likud, led by Menachem Begin. For the first time since the establishment of the state the labour movement was deposed from power, and the re-election of the Likud in 1981 pointed to the existence of two roughly equal electoral blocs, each with a broad ideological, social, and ethnic base, with the religious parties holding the balance between them. It was hard for the Labour Party to accommodate itself to being in opposition, and its disarray was further compounded by the struggle for leadership between Shimon Peres, Yitzhak Rabin, and, until his death in 1980, Yig'al Allon.

The Lebanese war (1982–5) and the economic crisis of 1983 eroded support for the Likud, and the elections of 1984 produced a virtual stalemate. It was resolved by the establishment of a national unity government, in which Peres served as prime minister for two years, and Yitzhak Shamir for the next two (Begin having resigned the previous summer). In 1988 similar results led to another national unity government under Shamir, this time without rotation. In 1990 the Labour Party succeeded in changing its leadership and its public image by instituting a system of primary elections. The Shamir government proved incapable of dealing with the major problems of the country: the Intifada (violent Palestinian resistance in the occupied territories), which broke out in December 1987, large-scale unemployment resulting from massive immigration from the Soviet Union, and the protracted but inconclusive peace negotiations with the Palestinians and the Arab governments, dating from the Madrid conference of 1991. Following a narrow but decisive victory in

the 1992 elections Yitzhak Rabin formed a coalition government led by the Labour Party.

The Likud victory of 1977 was a complete surprise to the leaders of the kibbutz movements, as it was to the rest of the labour movement, and it hastened processes which had already been in train for some years. Many of the ideological nuances which had distinguished the Ihud from the Kibbutz Me'uhad now seemed secondary, particularly in view of the Likud's policy of massive settlement in the occupied territories: although a very small minority in the Kibbutz Me'uhad continued the Tabenkin tradition and supported the extremist Hat'hiya party, the vast majority accepted the Allon plan as a basis for any future policy. Moreover, the special significance of 'ex-Ahdut Ha'avoda' in the Labour Party had disappeared with the party's reorganization in 1971. It seemed that the only way for the kibbutz movement to express itself politically was by appearing as a powerful and united force within the Labour Party. Since the mid-1950s more and more voices had been heard within the Kibbutz Me'uhad demanding unity with the other kibbutz movements. In practical terms, this meant unity with the Ihud.

The Ihud was ready. Its 1974 conference had called on the other kibbutz movements to open negotiations on the unity of the kibbutz movement, with the declared object of increasing its influence in the country as a whole. The results of the 1977 elections, and the conviction that it was necessary to mobilize as much power as possible to counteract the Likud's traditional hostility to the kibbutz, hastened this process. So the way was open for the establishment of the United Kibbutz Movement in 1980.

One of the major factors in this process was the emergence of a young, dynamic leadership in both of these movements. This coalition of youth movement graduates and kibbutz-born men and women had little patience for the traditional ideological styles which divided the movements. They believed that a united kibbutz movement could be a force in the politics of the Labour Party, and promote the basic values of the kibbutz in Israeli society. In fact, however, their public impact was not very great. They helped to mobilize support—including logistic backing at elections—for the Labour Party, and participated in Labour governments in posts similar to those which they and their predecessors had previously occupied. In the struggle for leadership of the party in 1979-80, the ex-Kibbutz Me'uhad group supported Allon and, after his death, Rabin, while many of the former Ihud leaders were firmly in the Peres camp, which was victorious in the internal party elections of 1980. Some of their Knesset members played an active part in the Golan

lobby, which advocated the imposition of Israeli law on the area. This was effected by the Golan Law of December 1981.¹

The Kibbutz Artzi remained aloof from the negotiations for unity of the kibbutz movement. Mapam stayed in the Labour Alignment, and the Kibbutz Artzi co-operated on a technical level with the other movements during election campaigns. But both its connection with the urban section of Mapam and the special emphases of its programme—its stress on social issues and the struggle for peace—prevented it from risking the loss of its political identity. There was constant pressure from within the party to take the lead of the left opposition and leave the Alignment. Within the kibbutzim of the Kibbutz Artzi ideological collectivism had been virtually abandoned, with the result that there was a small but very significant minority of voters and activists in the small independent left-wing parties, as well as a group which supported the Labour Party. But the great majority in this movement remained firm in its allegiance to Mapam.²

Politics aside, however, several differences in internal organization distinguished the Kibbutz Artzi from the other two movements: its faithfulness to the principle of the educational institute, and its hesitation in adopting changes such as the personal budget and family sleeping arrangements. Thus the Kibbutz Artzi never saw itself as a possible partner for unity with the other two movements. When, in 1984, Mapam refused to take part in the national unity government, the political divorce had no serious internal repercussions. Mapam eventually entered into an alliance with two other dovish parties, and formed an electoral alliance (known as Meretz) which was the Labour Party's major ally in the coalition of 1992.

The anti-Likud political activity, which was common both to the UKM and the Kibbutz Artzi, was to some extent counter-productive. During the first Likud government its leaders seemed to have modified the traditional enmity of the Revisionists and their successors to the kibbutz idea. But the 1981 elections, in which all the kibbutz movements combined to campaign visibly for the Labour Alignment, led to fierce attacks on the kibbutzim by the leaders of the Likud on the grounds that they were fortresses of privilege. By 1984 the Likud had managed to delegitimize the kibbutz movements as a force in national electioneering

¹ It is conceivable that had Mussa Harif, the outstanding member of this group, not been killed in a car crash in 1982, he would have succeeded in perpetuating a leftist group within the Labour Party built round the UKM leaders. In the event, however, this group fell apart quite quickly.

² Harari, *The Kibbutz Movement in the Elections*.

in the eyes of many citizens, and their support was given to Labour more reluctantly, and in a much lower key.

The kibbutz movements, and particularly the Kibbutz Artzi, also gave logistic and financial support to the extra-parliamentary protest movement Peace Now which sprang up in the course of the Lebanese war. It reached the peak of its influence in September 1982, in the great demonstration against the massacre in two Palestinian refugee camps near Beirut, but continued to demonstrate against the continued control and settlement of the occupied territories, and in favour of Labour's peace-making efforts.

The Lebanese war, unlike those which preceded it, was an 'avoidable war', initiated by Israel for the sake of geopolitical gains which were far from commanding the assent of the whole country. The kibbutz movements expressed their acceptance in its first stage, when its only aim was said to be the elimination of PLO forces which had been shelling Israeli towns, moshavim, and kibbutzim intermittently for several months. When it turned out to be a bloody and ineffective attempt to establish Israeli dominance over Lebanon, agreement changed to bitter opposition. The character of the fighting in this war, and in the campaign against the Intifada, was such that kibbutz-born soldiers played no special role in it, and their casualties were numerically similar to those of other soldiers. Another contrast between these campaigns and previous wars was that, for the first time in Israeli history, a number of soldiers refused to take part, or to serve in the occupied territories. Although the kibbutz movements strongly opposed such actions, many of these young dissenters were kibbutz members. Now, too, for the first time, there was a noticeable decline in the number of kibbutz-born soldiers who volunteered for officer training, but it rose again after the withdrawal from Lebanon in 1985.

SETTLEMENT

The victory of the Likud in 1977 resulted in a spurt of settlement, in which the kibbutz movements played a part (see Table 12.1). Though they were cautious about the areas in which they were prepared to settle, some of their plans coincided with those of the Likud, and were, in effect, a continuation of the policies of the previous decade. New settlements were set up on the Golan Heights and in the Jordan valley, the hill areas of Galilee, the Negev, and northern Sinai. In 1977 Ariel Sharon, then minister of agriculture, began to put into operation plans which had

TABLE 12.1 Numbers of kibbutzim and population by movement, 1977-91

	1977		1985		1991	
	Kibbutzim	Population	Kibbutzim	Population	Kibbutzim	Population
UKM ^a	155	60,500	166	75,700	166	78,300
Kibbutz Artzi	81	35,100	83	41,200	85	41,300
Kibbutz Dati	18	5,100	17	7,000	17	8,000
Pagi	2	900	2	1,300	2	1,700
TOTAL	256	101,600	268	125,200	270	129,300
% of Jewish population		3.3		3.5		3.1

Source: *Statistical Abstracts* (1978, 1986, 1992).

Includes *moshavim shitufi'im* affiliated to the Ihud, and later to the UKM.

^a In 1977 this included the Ihud and the Kibbutz Me'uhad.

been in existence for more than ten years but had been shelved in light of the new priorities after the 1967 war. These included 'non-conventional' settlements in Galilee: kibbutzim, moshavim, and other types of village largely based on small-scale industry. So the number of new settlements continued to grow throughout the period of economic expansion, until the crisis of 1985.

All the kibbutz movements except the Kibbutz Dati continued to oppose settlement in the occupied territories outside the limits set by the Allon plan, and refused to participate in the extensive colonization programmes of the Likud, even to the extent of opposing the setting up of *he'ahzuyot* of the Nahal in locations which were, in their view, not part of the national consensus. In 1982, in the wake of the peace treaty with Egypt, the settlers of northern Sinai staged vociferous protests against the decision to withdraw from the area, and in the recently founded town of Yamit there was a confrontation between the inhabitants and the army. By contrast, the Ihud's settlements in this area moved peacefully to a newly settled region within the pre-1967 borders, and took no part in the protest movement.

These events dealt a further blow to the classic theory of strategic settlement. It was now clear that, far from ensuring permanent possession, settlement in disputed territory was at the mercy of political agreements. The Likud government did not accept this thesis, and encouraged settlement in the occupied territories, in the belief that it would generate permanent political backing—a tenet rejected firmly by all the kibbutz movements, with the exception of the Kibbutz Dati.

The precedent of Sinai was very much in the consciousness of those who had settlement on the Golan Heights. Their leaders were active in promoting the act of 1981 which declared the region to be part of the State of Israel. After the election of the Rabin government in 1992, when it began to look as though peace with Syria was negotiable, many of them took part in demonstrations and other activities intended to avert the threat to their homes. It is not yet clear how they will react if a peace agreement which involves giving up some or all of the Golan Heights is reached.

ECONOMICS

The Likud's advent to power brought with it a change in the ideology and practice of economic policy. Its first finance minister, Simcha Ehrlich, proclaimed a policy of liberalization intended to reduce government intervention in the economy and increase long-term capital investment by the restoration of business confidence. In fact, however, the largely étatist structure of the economy was retained. By the end of 1977 inflation was accelerating rapidly. Productivity had been more or less stagnant since 1975, but the far-reaching social policies initiated in the early 1970s were continued, and the standard of living rose in accordance with the policy described by Begin as 'improving the people's lot'. This led to a considerable increase in the external debt, and reliance on special aid from governmental and charitable sources in the United States.

As a result, the inflationary pressures which had been partly contained until 1977 were given almost free rein, and from 1982 were increased as a result of the Lebanese war: by 1980 the annual inflation rate was 131 per cent, and by the second half of 1985 it had reached 500 per cent. At the end of that year the national unity government, led by Peres, initiated an emergency stabilization plan which reduced inflation to about 16 per cent during 1987, but cut the standard of living severely and retained an exceedingly high interest rate, amounting to 100 per cent during 1985/6. From then on the general state of the economy improved somewhat: government spending was reduced, particularly after the withdrawal from Lebanon in 1985; but there was still a considerable import surplus, which was only partly covered by additional American aid. From 1990, with the advent of large-scale immigration from Russia and the Baltic countries, unemployment began to be a central problem of the economy to a degree reminiscent of the years of mass immigration in the 1950s.³

³ Barkai, *Economic Patterns*, 18-23.

Nearly every facet of these developments was bad for the kibbutzim. Former governments had always considered the principle of 'dispersing the population' almost sacrosanct, and had therefore adopted a protectionist policy towards agriculture. Production quotas, export bonuses, and subsidies to both producers and consumers had been used to this end. Now, as a result of the aspiration to privatize the economy, these supports were abolished or drastically reduced. From 1977 onwards the price index for the production of agricultural goods constantly exceeded that for the prices for which they were sold, and the capital stock invested was gradually reduced.⁴ In addition, export opportunities were increasingly restricted as a result of the worldwide recession, and the protection of farmers in Europe and the US by import duties or subsidies to local farmers meant that many markets were closed to Israeli produce. Slowly, the fact that it was exceedingly difficult to make a living from agriculture alone reached the consciousness of the Israeli farmer. The moshavim were particularly badly hit, and many of their members left or found other employment. Michael Wolffsohn, referring to developments between 1971 and 1982, remarks: 'In contrast to the steady decline of moshav membership, the kibbutzim have not done badly at all, even managing to increase the number of kibbutz members between 1970 and 1982.'⁵

This was not only the result of the greater efficiency of kibbutz agriculture. In contrast to the moshavim, which had never succeeded in creating rural industries, by 1980 about half the income of the kibbutz movement was derived from industry. During the 1960s and 1970s kibbutz industry had expanded rapidly, and by the end of the 1970s it had become almost an item of faith that the kibbutz was one of the most efficient sectors of the Israeli economy. So the kibbutzim participated in the process of expansion undergone by the whole of the Israeli economy between 1977 and 1983. Despite the liquidation of the 'supplementary fund' which had given special support to kibbutz industries, money was plentiful—at a price. The credit of the kibbutz movement was good, and it was generally believed that, by creating new industries adapted to the changing conditions of the time, it was playing its traditional role of leadership, but in the economic sphere rather than in matters of settlement or defence. Moreover, during the period of galloping inflation it was virtually impossible to make any realistic estimate of the profitability of an

⁴ The figures, culled from government sources, are collected in Wolffsohn, *Israel*, 235-40.

⁵ *Ibid.* 237.

investment, or even, in many cases, of the simplest day-to-day business transaction. The deficiencies in kibbutz industry noted in Chapter 9 were either ignored or believed to be temporary difficulties which would be solved as industry reaped the profits of the current watchword: 'Expand!'⁶

This euphoric atmosphere was rudely shattered in 1983. The first sign of the coming disaster was a crisis on the Tel Aviv stock market, following the collapse in value of bonds issued by the leading banks, which had been shored up artificially (and illegally) by the banks themselves. Many kibbutzim, and the financial organs of the main kibbutz movements, had invested in these supposedly gilt-edged stocks—and, in some cases, also in highly speculative shares—in order to protect their assets from inflation, so they were very badly hurt. But the main blow came in 1985, with the economic recovery policy. Many kibbutzim, and most of the regional industrial complexes, had overexpanded their industries with the help of borrowed capital, and acquired a huge burden of debt, vastly exacerbated by the high real rates of interest. During 1986 it became clear that a great many firms and institutions were in a similar predicament, and there was a wave of bankruptcies as the economy adjusted itself to the new conditions. Interest rates were reduced, though they were still high, and over the coming years some of the most prestigious concerns were forced to reach agreement with the banks to recycle their debts.

The kibbutzim were in a particularly difficult situation, though not as badly off as the moshavim, many of whose members abandoned or rented out their farms, often simply refusing to pay their debts. One complicating factor was the legally (and morally) binding system of mutual guarantees, which meant that each movement had to be dealt with as a whole, in contrast to the private sector (including the moshavim), where the fate of each enterprise was decided on its own merits. After intensive and complex negotiations between the movements, the banks (who were owed vast sums, accumulating at compound interest), and the government, an arrangement was worked out by the end of 1986, whereby some debts would be wiped out and others recycled. But it took a very long time to put into operation. An additional arrangement, to deal with debts accrued since 1986, was signed in May 1996, but it is still not clear how and when it will be executed.

⁶ Dan Karmon, former chairman of the Federation of Kibbutz Industry, recalled that in 1979, when he advocated a policy of retrenchment at the federation's annual meeting, he was universally derided as a defeatist. Interview with the author, Feb. 1994.

The bewilderment and uncertainty which were the immediate results of the crisis had died down to a great extent by 1994. It became apparent that a good many kibbutzim had adopted a cautious investment policy, and were scarcely touched by the crisis.⁷ So the naïve view that the system as such had failed seemed to be wrong—though it could still be heard, both inside the kibbutz movement and outside it. It looked as though the kibbutz movement would recover in the long run, but that a number of kibbutzim, whose economic structure gave no hope for the future, might go to the wall or change their way of life and livelihood fundamentally. Others seemed likely to have their income mortgaged to the banks for many years to come.

The kibbutz movement was not damaged in the economic sphere alone. The sudden descent from unshakeable confidence to economic disaster, the feeling that accepted ways of action were no longer viable, and the threat to the very existence of a number of kibbutz communities, together led to a crisis of faith as deep as, and perhaps even more serious than, that of the 1950s. Its influence was felt in virtually every sphere of kibbutz life.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENTS

The kibbutz movement continued to grow slowly but steadily, both in absolute numbers and in relation to the Israeli population, until the crisis of the mid-1980s. In 1987 there was virtually no increase of population, and in 1988-9, for the first time ever in the history of the kibbutz, it grew smaller: to the growing proportion of kibbutz-born children who left after their 'moratorial period'⁸ were added an appreciable number of couples in their forties who had lost their faith in the future of the kibbutz; and this loss was accentuated by a distinct decline in the birth-rate, from 24 per thousand in 1985 to 17.1 per thousand in 1990. It was only in 1990, with the beginning of the absorption of immigrants from the then Soviet Union, that the tide again turned, and the size of the population increased slightly.⁹

These figures do not tell the whole story. They include all those who had lived on a kibbutz for a year or more, and had no other address: among these were permanent employees such as teachers, doctors, and nurses; in addition, a high proportion of the Russian immigrants came

⁷ This was the case with most of the religious kibbutzim, but they are far from being the only examples.

⁸ See p. 309 above.

⁹ Maron, *Kibbutz Movement*, 26-7; see also Table 12.1.

TABLE 12.2 Less productive sectors of the kibbutz population by age-group, 1972-90 (% over the whole of the kibbutz movement)

Year	Age		Total
	14-24	65+	
1972	52.6	4.2	56.8
1977	49.4	6.8	56.2
1990	48.5	10.2	58.7

Source: Maron, *Kibbutz Movement*, 32.

under the aegis of a scheme known as 'first home in the homeland', which gave them no more than a place to live and, often, to work, with no guarantee that they would join the kibbutz. Moreover, between 1977 and 1990 there was a small but significant increase in the combined proportion of two age-groups who played a relatively minor role in work and social life: those below 24 and those above 65 (see Table 12.2). The increase in the proportion of older members, from 6.8 per cent in 1977 to 10.2 per cent in 1990, was of immediate significance. The gradual drop in the number of young people reduced the current economic burden, but it was an ominous sign for the more distant future.

Against the background of these underlying trends, until the crisis of the mid-1980s and the beginning of Russian immigration the kibbutzim developed mainly on the lines already described in Chapter 11. The moratorium period, by now an accepted feature of kibbutz life, caused a number of acute problems. Even those young people who eventually settle down in the kibbutz had been absent from the work roster for something like a fifth of their working life, and this gap had to be filled, often by hired labour or by volunteers. Moreover, young men and women enjoying their *Wanderjahre* were not able to serve as youth leaders for the adolescent age-group, and the volunteers—essentially an unstable population, with no feel for Judaism or Zionism—tended to function as a reference group, influencing the values of the kibbutz adolescents at this most critical period in their lives.¹⁰ Nor, in general, did Nahal soldiers fill the demographic gap during or after their service:

¹⁰ Paradoxically, the places left empty by those in the 'wandering twenties' were often filled by young people born on other kibbutzim, working to earn money for their trip abroad. But this, too, was a volatile and transient population which could not exert a stabilizing educational influence.

the numbers leaving Nahal groups after their release from the army grew steadily, until many kibbutzim refused to accept such groups on the grounds that they did not repay the educational and financial efforts which had to be invested in them.

At the other end of the age scale, problems of old age were now acute or looming in the majority of kibbutzim. More and more older members had begun to reach an advanced age, and required special medical care. In some cases appropriately equipped accommodation or day-care centres were built; in others these facilities were provided on a regional basis. The principle of providing an active and useful life for the old in their own homes was adhered to as far as possible, and only when the kibbutz was unable to provide the necessary care were they sent to old-age homes outside the kibbutz.

In the cultural sphere the 'professionalization' of culture continued, stimulated by the spread of colour television, now a standard piece of equipment in every kibbutz home, and of video recorders. The joint cultural committee of the kibbutz movements decided that it was better to join the age of electronic culture than try to beat it: it established a small video unit which made films on subjects of interest to the kibbutzim, also hiring its services to outside bodies. One interesting development was the introduction of closed-circuit television in a great many kibbutzim: matters of local interest such as key committee meetings, general assemblies, and cultural events were broadcast, and it was reported that this was a successful means of stimulating attention and participation.

In matters of consumption the trend towards monetary budgets continued, with most kibbutzim of the Kibbutz Artzi adopting various versions of the 'comprehensive budget'. The acceptance of the principle of private means was by now widespread, and found expression in matters such as permission for members to travel abroad at their own expense. In 1984 the UKM adopted rules to abolish private property, but its decisions seem to have been very largely ignored. This was only one instance of developments which took place in the kibbutzim themselves, without reference to decisions of the movement or even in opposition to them. The kibbutz movement had become very much more pluralistic and less centralized. This tendency was strengthened by the economic crisis, in the course of which the officials of the movements were widely censured for having given bad advice during the expansionary period.

Another instance of this trend is the fall of the last bastion of 'com-

munal sleeping', the Kibbutz Artzi. During the Gulf War of 1992, on the advice of the civil defence authorities children in all the kibbutz movements slept in their parents' homes, in order to ensure their safety in the case of a gas attack. In the Kibbutz Artzi parents simply kept their children at home after the war, in opposition to the official movement line. At the same time, in many kibbutzim of all movements a number of functions which had been the responsibility of the *metapelet* were transferred to the home—in most cases, to the mother. This included the day-to-day care of clothes, and many aspects of health care.

There were also, however, attempts to resist the increasing tendency towards familialism and the perpetuation of sexual differentiation in the professions. The kibbutz movements' joint department for women's affairs was active in promoting workshops and seminars for raising women's consciousness, and preparing them for entrepreneurial and managerial positions. The fact that most women were able to take a course of academic studies of their own choice meant that their expectations and demands in choosing a profession gradually changed, though at a pace which was agonizingly slow for the convinced feminists. There were more female secretaries and treasurers, a few farm managers, and a significant number of directors of the small 'unconventional' branches which were now becoming a common feature of the kibbutz economy.

In the educational system the trend towards regionalism continued: almost all kibbutz high schools, and the great majority of elementary schools, were now organized on a regional basis. The pursuit of academic achievement was almost universal, and the matriculation certificate an accepted goal in all high schools. None the less, there was still a good deal of experimentation both in teaching methods and in subject-matter alongside the conventional curriculum, and this was encouraged by the kibbutz movement's teacher-training colleges at Oranim and Tel Aviv. One of the best-known examples of educational innovation was Ein Shemer's 'educational greenhouse', where high-school children were encouraged to design and conduct their own experiments in biology and related subjects.¹¹ But the increasing number of hired teachers had a serious effect on those aspects of education most characteristic of the kibbutz.

Social education, including such subjects as education for democracy, political awareness, and kibbutz values, was in a state of constant flux. In most kibbutzim it was difficult to maintain the classic 'children's society' at a time when the great majority of those who might have provided

¹¹ The greenhouse, conceived and managed by Avital Geva, a well-known plastic artist, was transferred *en bloc* to the Venice Biennale in 1993, where it formed part of the Israeli salon.

leadership were at the stage of their social moratorium outside the kibbutz. In some areas similar activities were carried out on a regional basis, in the high school or educational institute; in others, branches of the national youth movements—Scouts, Noar Oved, or Hashomer Hatzair—were opened within the kibbutz. But it was impossible entirely to resist the erosion of values which pervaded the whole of the Western world, including Israel. Drug and alcohol abuse appeared among teenagers in many kibbutzim, and the kibbutz movements set up a special department to combat them. There was even one widely publicized case of gang rape in a kibbutz.

The kibbutz has remained a fruitful area for research of all kinds. In the introduction to Volume I, written in 1990, I mentioned 3,000 items in the databank of Haifa University's Institute for Kibbutz Studies. By 1995 this number had grown to almost 5,000. Applied social science has also flourished. Most kibbutzim use the services of a social worker, and a battery of psychiatrists and psychologists is available in the regional centres for family and child care. On the level of the movements, the departments for social affairs run courses for the improvement of a wide range of skills and organizational practices, from workshops on personal relationships to manpower planning and the running of the general assembly. These departments have also become powerful agents for change in the atmosphere of uncertainty and soul-searching brought about by the crisis. Their 'enablers', working in communities whose members feel that they are unable to deal with their problems without outside help, encourage them to rethink their aims and methods of work, the relationships between the members and their methods of organization and management. In many cases they have also brought with them clear attitudes and concrete suggestions, which together amount to what is called 'the new kibbutz', or, simply, 'innovation'. I shall conclude this brief sketch with a discussion of this phenomenon.

THE 'NEW KIBBUTZ'

The above analysis of the economic aspects of the crisis emphasizes the external factors which, compounded with lack of judgement on the part of many of the economic managers of the kibbutz movements, were its immediate cause.¹² In its wake, however, many have maintained that the

¹² In 1996 a report by a prominent expert in business law maintained that the source of much of the indebtedness of the kibbutzim—and of many other Israeli businesses—to the banks was the levying of excessive (and, often illegal) payments and rates of interest.

fault lay with deep structural deficiencies in the system, or in basically mistaken economic and social policies. Led by a small group of activists both in the UKM and in the Kibbutz Artzi who used the movement press and research institutions to advantage, they have constantly reiterated the same basic theme: the crisis proved that without fundamental change the kibbutz could not survive. The message found a receptive audience, motivated by a myriad dissatisfactions with the system. Many of its proponents, former enthusiasts for Marxian socialism and the Soviet Union, drew ideological inspiration from the collapse of world Communism, which coincided dramatically with the economic difficulties of the kibbutzim.¹³ Others had long been advocating reforms in social and economic policy.¹⁴ The crisis atmosphere prompted many kibbutzim, with the help of the movements' departments for community development, to set up 'innovation teams', whose function was to clarify the aims of the community in the light of the new conditions, and suggest ways of putting them into practice.

Even those who rejected the idea of radical innovation agreed that there was much room for increased efficiency, particularly in the economic sphere. One of the first results of the disaster was an improvement in accountancy procedures—an essential preliminary in the complex negotiations with banks and government. This was accompanied by the adoption of better methods of cost accounting, and their detailed application to each branch. The innovators suggested going one step further, and turning branches—productive or service—into 'profit centres'. Each branch would pay its way within the system or in exchange with the outside world, and control its own investment and employment policy without the intervention of the central institutions of the kibbutz. Under the impetus of the 'new thinking', many branches were able to detect pockets of underemployment, or reveal new ways of making money: for example, kibbutzim close to a town whose educational system was not fully exploited opened their kindergartens, toddlers' groups, and schools to the children of working mothers from outside the kibbutz for pay. Not only did this make the work more efficient; since the educational staff were now seen as part of the productive system, it often increased their

Though fiercely contested by the banks themselves, this report did much to restore the self-image of the kibbutzim; there were many who claimed that exploitation by the banks, rather than inefficiency, was the main cause of the kibbutzim's economic distress.

¹³ Harell, *The New Kibbutz*, 11-23; Weber, *Renewal*, 5-29, 157-60.

¹⁴ See e.g. Helman and Kroll, 'Resources, Expenditures and Economic Decisions'; Helman, 'Changes in Methods of Planning'.

social status and self-image—an effect long desired by those concerned with the equality of the sexes.

Another change was the attempt to use the skills and educational attainments of the members to bring in income from outside the kibbutz, or to create small, 'personal' branches within it. In one sense, this was no innovation: the phenomenon of professionals working in nearby towns as engineers and architects, university teachers, doctors, and social workers had been common since the late 1960s. But until now it had been seen as a deviation from the norm, tolerated in order to ensure the self-fulfilment and happiness of the individual or the welfare of the neighbouring town. The same applied to many small creative enterprises, often in the field of arts and crafts—pottery, painting, toy-making, the design and manufacture of clothing, and many more—which produced marketable goods. Now these occupations were positively encouraged, in order to increase the income of the kibbutz with little further investment, even if the absence of several members from the general economic framework meant that they had to be replaced by hired workers. A lawyer who was also a skilled cowman could be replaced relatively cheaply, and his monetary value to the kibbutz was much greater as a lawyer than as an agricultural worker.

At the same time, there was much soul-searching about the economic implications of other aspects of kibbutz life. The chief impetus which led to the regionalization of schooling was the belief that it would reduce costs, though there were also educational arguments in its favour. Similarly, the extension of monetary budgets to a growing number of areas was aimed not only at increasing the members' choice, but at reducing waste by making them personally responsible for expenditure on items such as electricity or children's clothes. There were also a number of attempts to solve the basic problem of the smallness of the industrial plant through co-operation with other kibbutzim.

All these innovations were, in effect, developments of trends which had already existed before the crisis. Now they were widely discussed throughout the movement, and by 1990 about half of the kibbutzim had adopted one or more of them. Other suggestions were more radical, and less widespread in practice. They included, in the economic sphere, partnership between kibbutzim and private capital; the establishment of boards of management for industrial branches, with the participation (sometimes as general managers) of paid experts from the private sector; and the abandoning of the system of rotation of managers. Similar suggestions were made for changing the democratic structure of the kibbutz:

the replacement of the general assembly by an elected council; the extensive use of ballots, rather than direct voting; and the establishment of a 'control committee', to examine the effectiveness of officials, and the execution of decisions. By 1990, one or more of these ideas had been adopted by about a quarter of the kibbutzim.¹⁶

It will readily be seen that many of these innovations went further than a simple attempt to improve the economic performance of the kibbutz: they involved changes in accepted social patterns, some of which were widely considered to be destructive of the kibbutz way of life. This belief was strengthened by the vocabulary used by the innovators to emphasize their aim of increasing businesslike efficiency: for instance, they described the extension of monetary budgets as 'privatization of consumption', and spoke of 'boards of directors' rather than the traditional 'committees' and 'branch organizers'. However, most of the changes so far mentioned were simply extensions or improvements of long-established practices: even in the area of management, it was usual for kibbutzim to enlist the aid of outside experts, often in the framework of the appropriate department of their kibbutz movement. But the critics asked whether quantity would not sooner or later affect quality: whether, for instance, the increase in the number of professional outside workers would not turn the kibbutz from a commune of production into a rather loose community bound only by a degree of collective consumption; or whether the reliance on outside experts would not bind the kibbutz to decisions made by people who did not understand the system, and might even be hostile to it.

Whether for these reasons, or because of a feeling that the worst of the crisis was past, or simply because of the innate conservatism of the kibbutz community, by the beginning of 1993 the wave of innovations had slowed down.¹⁶ Some even more radical suggestions, including the introduction of monetary incentives for extra work, and the abolition of breakfast or supper in the dining-hall, were adopted by a very small number of kibbutzim; and in 1993 one kibbutz, Ein Zivan on the Golan Heights, which attempted to establish a differential wage system, was threatened with expulsion from the UKM. Despite the far-reaching changes which had been widely adopted, this was almost universally seen to be beyond any acceptable definition of a kibbutz.

It is as yet too soon to tell whether the impetus to innovation will be

¹⁶ Getz, *Dissemination*.

¹⁶ Adar, Turniavsky, and Rozner, *Methods of Introducing Innovation*; Shapira, 'Divided Elites'.

renewed. There has already been a reaction, and a small group known as 'the communal stream' is searching for ways of returning to the pristine values of the kibbutz. But it looks as though some innovations are here to stay. Monetary budgets for consumptions, and a concomitant abandonment of any attempt to control private means, are virtually universal, as are the tendency to regionalization of the educational system and the sale of services, from participation in the educational system to use of the swimming pool and the renting out of unoccupied houses. The economic system is increasingly fragmented, with a growing number of professionals working outside the kibbutz, and there is little compunction about employing outside workers.¹⁷ It seems as though each kibbutz will eventually find its own blend of the old and the new, and none of the kibbutz movements will have the power or the desire to impose anything like the degree of uniformity which was customary only a decade ago. In little more than ten years the kibbutz movement has developed from a group of centralized and more or less similar federations to a loose pluralistic association of communities.

REFLECTIONS AND CONJECTURES

The unexpected victory of the Likud in the 1977 elections, and the accession to power of political elements traditionally hostile to the kibbutzim, led to a period of self-examination followed by the unification of the two major kibbutz movements: a closing of the ranks in face of actual and anticipated attack by the new political establishment. At the same time there began to be felt a deep sense of unease at the demographic statistics which revealed that an unprecedented number of kibbutz-born youth were not returning to the kibbutzim after their army service. The discussions which this engendered were overshadowed, though not brought to an end, by the financial crisis of the mid-1980s, which is as yet far from resolved. During this period, therefore, crisis followed crisis until it may be said that the very fact of survival was in itself a remarkable achievement.

In some ways these crises were significantly different from those which preceded them. For the first time in the history of the kibbutz movement, economic difficulties threatened its very existence. Governmental

¹⁷ On the other hand, the actual number of hired workers in the kibbutz movement as a whole decreased from 14,400 (17.3% of the total workforce) in 1986 to 12,600 (15.7%) in 1990. It seems that this has become a question of economic calculation rather than of ideology. Maron, *Kibbutz Movement*, 45.

support was no longer certain. The Likud saw the kibbutzim as an inimical political element, and consistently opposed suggestions for a massive recycling of their debts, while the Labour Party was divided on the issue; many of its leaders saw in the kibbutz movement a useful but anachronistic ally at best, and a burden on the taxpayer at worst. Politically, neither the UKM within the Labour Party nor the Kibbutz Artzi within Mapam now had the prestige, the influence, or the degree of representation which they had traditionally enjoyed; and their status in the eyes of the public and the political establishment was gravely impaired by the impression that they were attempting to save by governmental intervention a sector which would otherwise be unable to survive. Moreover, in contrast to earlier crises, there was in many parts of the kibbutz movement, including its leadership, a distinct element of self-condemnation: the fault was widely felt to lie not in changing historical circumstances, or in the hostility of the outside world, but in the leadership of the kibbutz movement, or the management of the individual kibbutz—perhaps in the kibbutz system itself.

In one respect, however, the situation was similar to that which we have seen to be the norm for most of the previous seventy years. The moshavim had sufficient political clout to accomplish legislation which ensured global remission and recycling of their debts, whereas the question of a similar settlement for the kibbutzim encountered much political opposition, and even more bureaucratic delay: by 1995 the overall settlement decided on in 1989 had been executed for only a small number of kibbutzim. It was by now quite clear that this was the last such settlement: in the foreseeable future the economic survival of the kibbutz would no longer depend on the degree of public support it could muster, but on its ability to make its own way within the Israeli economy.

The decline in political representation which occurred from 1977 onwards was in part a continuation of a previous trend, and the expression of the kibbutz movement's decline in relative numbers and in prestige. But in 1990 there came about a qualitative change, with the introduction of 'primary' elections in all the major Israeli parties, including the Labour Party. The party's candidates for the Knesset elections were no longer chosen by a nominations committee selected mainly by the party leadership; each region chose its own candidates, in a secret ballot, with the addition of a 'national list'. This system gave considerable weight to the candidates' personal image—by now presented in the press, on radio, and on television—and greatly reduced the power of sectoral interests, including that of the kibbutzim. Though the UKM

was considered a 'region', only two of its candidates were allotted realistic places in the party list. From now on, the power of the kibbutzim in national politics would depend largely on the quality of their candidates, and their ability to commend themselves to the party membership at large.

The crisis of the younger generation resulted in great part from the widespread lack of faith in the values of the kibbutz or in its economic future which came to the surface in the mid-1980s. But to no small extent it also came from within: the very fact of long-term survival, and the coming to maturity of the younger generation, led to processes such as those described in Chapter 11 as post-utopian. It is not surprising that some of the more negative attitudes which derive from the post-utopian process should be found among the younger generation, for its members do not automatically possess or even comprehend the pristine vision of their elders.¹⁸ The sense of crisis that came with the realization that this was so sprang primarily from the brute fact that the kibbutz-born had become their communities' main hope of survival. Until the early 1970s most of them had, in fact, adopted their parents' values and remained in the kibbutzim. The changes in attitude of the younger generation described in Chapter 10 had an increasing effect on membership figures from the mid-1970s on. It was not difficult to make statistical extrapolations which forecast a disastrous future—a forecast which is at least partly borne out by present trends. This process, generally interpreted as an educational failure, has heightened the sense of demographic crisis.

During most of the history of the kibbutz movement social change was justified (or resisted) on grounds which stemmed from, or were compatible with, a socialist world-view. From about 1980 onwards, however, the ideological background changed. Suggestions for rethinking the internal organization of the kibbutz, many of them stemming from the simple need to increase efficiency or adapt to new conditions, were now advocated on grounds, and in language, derived from a quite different ideology from that of former years. The reorganization of individual branches in order to increase accountability and personal responsibility was described as the creation of 'profit centres'. The extension of the system of monetary budgets, leaving a greater proportion for the use of the individual family, was described as 'privatization'. Concepts of efficiency and cost-accounting were introduced into spheres hitherto accepted as part

¹⁸ Recent research amply confirms this. See e.g. Gibton and Sabar, 'Many Doubts, Few Excuses'; Avrahami, 'Orientation and Behaviour of Youth'.

of the network of social services provided by the kibbutz according to need.¹⁹ The improvisations were still ideologized, but the ideology was no longer that of socialism, but of late twentieth-century capitalism.

How can it have come about that values so inimical to its pristine ideals came to be powerful, if not dominant, in kibbutz society? I have already emphasized that the outside world impinges on every aspect of kibbutz life, as it does on that of every other community or social system. From the mid-1970s the messages of Thatcherism and Reaganism were heard, and propagated, in Israel as elsewhere, in the mass media, the universities, and among the intelligentsia. Like the rest of Israeli society, the kibbutz was deeply influenced by the *Zeitgeist*. This influence was exacerbated by feelings of uncertainty and guilt following the economic failure of the mid-1980s, which many felt to be the result not of external circumstances, but of the kibbutz system itself. Those with deep faith in the kibbutz totally rejected this view, and looked for ways to improve rather than for fundamental change. But the social pluralism which had characterized all the kibbutz movements for two decades had also led to ideological pluralism. Many of those who came to the kibbutz primarily for its 'quality of life', and many kibbutz-born members who saw in it a home rather than a distinctive social system, were prepared to acquiesce in processes of change which derived from a far-reaching ideological revision.

Four Scenarios

It would be presumptuous to attempt a firm forecast of the future of the kibbutz movement. But the trends I have described may lead us to a number of informed guesses. If, before the upheaval of 1977, the kibbutz movement might have been compared to a ship which continues on its course despite all the forces acting to break it up, today it would be more correct to speak of a vessel still strong enough to continue on its way, but whose crew are uncertain as to the direction it should take. There is no longer a consensus, within the kibbutz movement or outside it, about its overall purpose and its function in Israeli society; and those who continue to maintain that its traditional tasks are still to be done are in an ever smaller minority. Its position has changed radically since the 1970s. It can no longer expect government aid for geographic expansion: the age of settlement is past. On the other hand, as in any other modern economy, it will continue to receive help from government departments,

¹⁹ Keene, 'Can We Live Together?'; Lieberman, 'Changes in Discourse'; id., 'On Metaphor'.

banks, and other financial institutions if this seems to be economically justified. More than ever, the kibbutz is, and will continue to be, a business proposition; and its economic future depends on the extent to which it can run its affairs efficiently. Without the external support which it has received for most of its history, the kibbutz's status has become much like that of other communal movements the world over, and its future is likely to be governed by the same laws of development which determine their fate.

Under these circumstances, four possibilities present themselves. This first is apocalypse: economic failure, widespread abandonment of the kibbutzim, bankruptcies, and possession by creditors. Though not impossible, at the moment it seems as if there is a sufficient reservoir of talent, faith, and capital in the kibbutz movement to make such a complete general collapse unlikely. But it could happen on a smaller scale. In the second scenario, the kibbutzim will continue to exist, but with no overall aim or uniting principle: each will make its own way, in social and economic terms, surviving as best it can with the resources of capital, manpower, and technical skill at its disposal. Some kibbutzim—the weakest in economic and/or ideological terms—will no doubt gradually reduce the degree of communality in their social structure: some will become *moshavim shitufim*; others will adopt stratagems such as differential wages for managers and other workers; still others might abandon communalism altogether, and use their capital assets to turn themselves into limited companies, as has happened to more than one commune in the United States. To turn a kibbutz into a 'normal' village would entail a good deal of legal work, and perhaps some legislation, but it could doubtless be done. Such villages could still be called kibbutzim, but this would be an acknowledgement of their origins and history rather than an indication of their social structure.

The third scenario envisages the other extreme: a continuation of the trend described above as the communal backlash. There could be a renewal of communal ideology and practice, led by a strengthened kibbutz movement. In this case, the term 'kibbutz' would continue to denote a society marked by the communal ownership and democratic control of its means of production, and those communities not prepared to accept at least this minimum would be denied this honorific term, by exclusion from the kibbutz movement—perhaps even by legal means. A return to all or most of the classic forms of 'communal consumption' seems unlikely, but there would certainly be rules to ensure a minimum of equality and social control of consumption.

The fourth possible future is a combination of the above two. Each kibbutz would be free to define its own degree of communalism. The kibbutz movement would not attempt to define the social structure of the individual community, but would give aid in the form of exchange of information, technical support, and the like. It seems probable that this pluralism would also apply to concepts of the aims of the kibbutz and its relation to the surrounding society. Such a trend can already be discerned. Several kibbutzim, in the Kibbutz Dati and outside it, see their social values as a consequence of their religious or spiritual beliefs—Orthodox, Reform, and Conservative Judaism, Steinerism, and more. Others, particularly the small urban kibbutzim, view themselves as centres of social service. A small group, and a handful of kibbutzim, advocate the 'greening of the kibbutz movement', believing that it can be a force for ecological improvement. Others, particularly in the Kibbutz Artzi, emphasize their political function, and yet others their connection with the youth movements—not only as a source for recruitment, but as a way to influence Israeli society by educational means. Each of these communities has found, or is consciously seeking, its aim. But the kibbutz movement as such has no common objective beyond the maintenance and reinforcement of the existing kibbutzim and, if possible, a modest degree of expansion.

In all but the apocalyptic scenario, several of the historical achievements of the kibbutz movement seem likely to be preserved. The network of villages covering the whole of Israel, the economic values which they have created, their cultural creativity, including the constant reinterpretation of Jewish tradition—all these seem likely to survive; though it is far from clear how the rural ethos, still one of the most fundamental and abiding aspects of kibbutz life, will survive the increasing urbanization of Israeli society.²⁰ It seems probable, too, that a hard core will continue to live more or less stringently in accordance with the communal ethos. How many such communities there will be depends crucially on their ability to recruit members to sustain and strengthen them.

Here, the lessons of history are far from unambiguous. I have emphasized above that the emotional attachment of the members to each other and to their special way of life, as well as to their physical environment, is essential for the survival of the kibbutz community. It seems that the

²⁰ It is estimated that the population of Israel, now about five million, will increase to some eight million by 2020, making it one of the most densely populated countries in the world (700 inhabitants per sq. km., as against 430 per sq. km. in Holland today). Mazor *et al.*, *Israel 2020*, vol. i, p. xciv.

conditions of present-day life do not encourage such social alliances, or the original impulse (the 'communal experience') without which they are unlikely to be formed and to endure; and we have scarcely begun to feel the effects of the electronic age on the ways of thought and social relationships of the generation now growing up in the kibbutzim and outside them. It seems probable, therefore, that, even if there is an increase in recruitment from the youth movements, the number of kibbutzim faithful to the communal heritage is likely to decrease.

But they are unlikely to disappear entirely. For the history of communal societies and movements shows that the communal experience is universal—or, more exactly, inextinguishable: like fire, it can appear to die down, but it always breaks out afresh, in new, and often unexpected, places—perhaps in the hearts and minds of people with no previous connection with the kibbutz.²¹ If so, such groups will find the kibbutz both a source of inspiration and a convenient instrument for the realization of their ideals.

But even if the apocalyptic scenario turns out to be closest to the truth, the kibbutz movement will still have been the most successful of its kind, rich in social, cultural, and moral achievement. Just as we look back today on the flowering of culture and the democratic way of life in ancient Athens, so will the kibbutz continue to stand out as a unique example of the way men and women can live together in close community, creativity, and dedication to an ideal. The events and people described in these two volumes were rooted in their time and place, and they were primarily concerned with their contribution to the Jewish people and the State of Israel. But their achievements—and their failures—have become part of the heritage of all mankind.

²¹ Near, 'The Collective Experience'.

Appendix I

New Settlement by Movement, 1939-77

	Kibbutz Me'uhad	Ihud	Kibbutz Artzi	Hever Hakvut- zot	Kibbutz Dati	Ha'oved Hatzioni	Poalei Agudat Israel	Total kibbutzim	<i>Moshavim Shitufim</i>	Moshavim	Other rural	Development towns
Sept.-Dec. 1939	2	—	1	—	—	—	—	3	—	2	—	—
1940	1	—	—	3	—	—	—	4	—	3	—	—
1941	1	—	1	2 [-1]	1	—	—	5	—	1	—	—
1942	2	—	2	1 [-1]	—	—	—	5	—	1	1	—
1943	4	—	2	2	2	1	—	11	—	3	—	—
1944	1	—	2	—	—	—	1	4	—	2	—	—
Jan.-May 1945 (inc.)	1	—	—	1	1	—	—	3	—	1	—	—
June-Dec. 1945 (inc.)	2	—	3	—	1 [-1]	—	—	6	—	2	1	—
1946	6 [-2]	—	5	4 [ms1]	3	—	—	18	5 [m4]	3	2	—
Jan. 1947-May 1948 (inc.)	4 [-2]	—	3 [-1]	3	2 [-1]	2 [-1]	—	14	1	4	2	—
June 1948-June 1949 (inc.)	19 [ms1]	2 ^a	17	5 [-1]	9 [ms3]	3 [ms2]	2 [-1]	57	3	35 ^b	5	4

July 1949–July 1950 (inc.)	8	—	6	4	2	2	—	22	4	110 ^c	12	5
	[−1]		[−1]						[m1]			
Aug. 1950–Dec. 1951 (inc.)	1	2	2	1	—	1	1	8	1	27 ^d	3	5
1952	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	2	—	20 ^e	4	2
1953	—	6 ^f	1	—	—	—	—	7	—	27 ^f	—	1
1954	1	3 ^h	—	—	—	—	—	4	1	4	5	1
1955–60	—	1	6	—	—	—	—	7	3	42	18	8
1961–6	1	1	—	—	2	—	—	4	3	7	2	2
1967–70	4	5	2	—	3	—	—	14	3	12	6	1
1971–7	4	5	2	—	2	—	—	13	9	24	22	6
TOTAL	62	26	56	26	28	9	4	211	33	330	83	35
	[−6]		[−2]	[−4]	[−5]	[−3]	[−1]	[−21]	[−5]			

Sources: *UAW Reports* (1939–45; 1945–9; 1949–55); Orren, *Settlement Amid Struggles*; Bein and Perlmann, *Immigration and Settlement*; Gvati, *A Century of Settlement*; information from archives of kibbutzim.

Notes

Figures apply to December of each year, unless otherwise stated. Figures in square brackets refer to kibbutzim and *moshavim shitufi'im* which ceased to exist or changed their social structure within five years of their foundation. Symbols within the square brackets denote:

— the community broke up, and the site was abandoned or devoted to other uses.

ms the kibbutz became a *moshav shitufi*.

m the *moshav shitufi* became a *moshav*.

^a Not originally affiliated to a kibbutz movement, but joined the Ihud after their establishment.

^b Of these, 26 were immigrants' *moshavim*, populated by new immigrants with no previous preparation or agricultural training.

^c Of these, 91 were immigrants' *moshavim*.

^d All of these were immigrants' *moshavim*.

^e Of these, 14 were immigrants' *moshavim*.

^f Three of these were founded by the Mapai section of kibbutzim of the Kibbutz Me'uhad which split in 1951.

^g Of these, 18 were immigrants' *moshavim*. Almost all the others were established in the framework of the Histadrut's campaign 'From Town to Village'.

^h Two of these were founded by the Mapai section of kibbutzim of the Kibbutz Me'uhad which split in 1951.

Appendix 2

Population of Kibbutzim as Percentage of Jewish Population, 1939-77

	No. of kibbutzim	Population of kibbutzim	Jewish population	%
Sept. 1939	71	24,105	450,000	5.3
May 1945	126	32,500	550,000	5.9
May 1948	177	49,140	650,000	7.6
1950	214	66,708	1,202,993	5.6
1955	225	77,818	1,590,519	4.9
1960	229	77,955	2,150,358	3.6
1965	233	80,735	2,299,078	3.5
1970	243	84,900	2,561,400	3.3
1977	256	101,600	3,077,300	3.3

Sources: Number and population of kibbutzim: until 1948: *UAW Reports*; after 1948: *Statistical Abstracts* (the number of kibbutzim in *Statistical Abstracts* from 1965 onwards is incorrect, as it ignores new settlements: this has been corrected here). The apparent discrepancies between these sources (and between them and the figures in Appendix 1) stem from the fact that until 1948 *plugot* are included in the number of kibbutzim.

For Jewish population, Bachi, *Population of Israel*.

The figures apply to December of each year, unless otherwise stated.

Appendix 3

The Kibbutz Movement 1995

Kibbutz	Year founded	Affiliation	Former affiliation(s)	Map reference
Adamit	1971	KA		F ₂
Afek	1935	UKM	KM	E ₃
Afik	1972	UKM	KM	H ₃
Afikim	1924	UKM	IKK, KM	G ₄
Almog	1979	UKM	IKK	G ₈
Alonim	1935	UKM	KM	E ₄
Alumim	1966	KD		C ₁₀
Alumot ^a	1969	UKM	IKK, HK	G ₄
Amiad	1946	UKM	IKK, HK	G ₃
Amir	1939	KA		G ₁
Ashalim ^b	1976	UKM	MS	C ₁₂
Ashdot Ya'akov (Ihud) ^c	1951	UKM	IKK, KM	G ₄
Ashdot Ya'akov (Me'uhad) ^c	1924	UKM	KM	G ₄
Ayelet Hashahar	1916	UKM	IKK, KM	G ₂
Bahan	1954	UKM	IKK	E ₅
Bar'am	1949	KA		G ₂
Barkai	1949	KA		E ₅
Be'eri	1946	UKM	KM	C ₁₀
Be'erot Yitzhak ^d	1948	KD		D ₇
Beit Alpha	1922	KA	HK, ind.	G ₅
Beit Govrin	1949	UKM	KM	D ₉
Beit Ha'emek	1949	UKM	IKK, KM	E ₂
Beit Hashita	1936	UKM	KM	G ₄
Beit Kama	1949	KA		D ₁₀
Beit Keshet	1944	UKM	KM	F ₄
Beit Nir	1957	KA		D ₉
Beit Oren	1939	UKM	KM	E ₃ , 4
Beit Rimon	1979	KD		F ₃
Beit Zera	1927	KA	ind.	G ₄
Bror Hayil	1948	UKM	IKK, HK	C ₉
Dafna	1939	UKM	KM	G ₁
Dalia	1939	KA		E ₄
Dan	1939	KA		G ₁
Degania Aleph	1910	UKM	IKK, HK	G ₄
Degania Beit	1920	UKM	IKK, HK	G ₄
Dorot	1941	UKM	IKK, HK	C ₁₀
Dovrat	1946	UKM	IKK, HK	F ₄

Kibbutz	Year founded	Affiliation	Former affiliation(s)	Map reference
Dvir	1951	KA		D10
Eilon	1938	KA		F2
Eilot	1962	UKM	KM	B5
Ein Carmel	1947	UKM	KM	E4
Ein Dor	1948	KA		F, G4
Ein Gedi	1956	UKM	IKK	F10
Ein Gev	1937	UKM	IKK, KM	G7
Ein Hahoresht	1929	KA		D5
Ein Hamifratz	1938	KA		E3
Ein Hanatziv	1946	KD		G5
Ein Harod (Ihud) ^c	1954	UKM	IKK, KM	F4
Ein Harod (Me'uhad) ^c	1921	UKM	KM, GA	F4.
Ein Hashlosht	1950	UKM	IKK, OZ	B10
Ein Hashofet	1937	KA		E4
Ein Shemer	1927	KA		E5
Ein Tzurim ^c	1946	KD		C9
Ein Zivan	1968	UKM	KM	H2
Einat ^f	1952	UKM	IKK, KM	D7
El Rom	1971	UKM	KM	H1
Elifaz	1983	KA		B4
Erez	1949	UKM	IKK, HK	C9
Evron	1945	KA		E2
Eyal ^g	1949	UKM	KM	E6
Farod	1949	UKM	KM	G2, 3
Ga'ash	1951	KA		D6
Ga'aton	1948	KA		F2
Gadot	1949	UKM	KM	G2
Gal Ed	1945	UKM	IKK, KM	E4
Gal-On	1946	KA		D9
Gan Shmuel	1921	KA		E5
Gat	1942	KA		D9
Gazit	1950	KA		G4
Gesher	1939	UKM	*KM	G4
Gesher Haziv	1949	UKM	IKK, ind.	E2
Geshor	1976	KA		H3
Geva	1921	UKM	IKK, HK	F4
Gevim	1947	UKM	IKK, HK	C10
Gezer ^h	1945	UKM	IKK, HK	D8
Gilgal	1970	UKM	KM	G7
Ginegar	1922	UKM	IKK, HK	F4
Ginossar	1937	UKM	KM	G3
Giv'at Brenner	1928	UKM	KM	D8
Giv'at Haim (Ihud) ^c	1952	UKM	IKK, KM	D5
Giv'at Haim (Me'uhad) ^c	1932	UKM	KM	D5
Giv'at Hashlosht	1925	UKM	KM	D7
Giv'at Oz	1949	KA		F4

Kibbutz	Year founded	Affiliation	Former affiliation(s)	Map reference
Glil Yam	1943	UKM	KM	D6
Gonen	1953	UKM	IKK	G2
Grofit	1966	UKM	IKK	B4
Gvar Am	1942	UKM	KM	C9
Gvat	1926	UKM	KM	F4
Gvulot	1943	KA		B11
Habonim ^b	1949	UKM	MS	D4
Hafetz Haim	1944	PAI		D8
Hagoshrim	1948	UKM	KM	G1
Hahotrim	1951	UKM	KM	E3
Hama'apil	1945	KA		E5
Hamadia	1942	UKM	IKK, HK	G5
Hanaton	1983	UKM		F3
Hanita	1938	UKM	IKK, HK	E2
Ha'ogen	1939	KA		D5
Ha'on	1949	UKM	IKK, HK	G4
Harduf	1982	UKM		E3
Har'el	1948	KA		D, E8
Hasolelim	1949	UKM	IKK, OZ	F3
Hatzerim	1946	UKM	IKK, HK	C11
Hatzor	1937	KA		D8
Hazore'a	1936	KA		E4
Heftziba	1922	UKM	KM, ind.	G5
Holit	1978	UKM	IKK	B11
Horshim	1955	KA		E6
Hukuk	1946	UKM	KM	G3
Hulata	1936	UKM	KM	G8
Hulda	1910	UKM	IKK, HK	D8
Kabri	1949	UKM	KM	E2
Kadarim	1980	UKM		G3
Kallia	1974	UKM	IKK	G8
Karmia	1950	KA		C9
Kerem Shalom	1968	KA		B11
Ketura	1973	UKM	IKK	C4
Kfar Aza	1951	UKM	IKK, HK	C10
Kfar Blum	1943	UKM	IKK, KM	G1
Kfar Daniel ^b	1951	UKM	MS	D8
Kfar Etzion ⁱ	1967	KD		E9
Kfar Gil'adi	1916	UKM	IKK, KM, GA	G1
Kfar Glickson	1936	UKM	IKK, OZ	E5
Kfar Hahoresht	1933	UKM	IKK, HK	F4
Kfar Hamaccabi	1936	UKM	IKK, HK	E3
Kfar Hanassi	1948	UKM	IKK, KM	G2
Kfar Haruv	1973	UKM	IKK	H3
Kfar Masaryk	1933	KA		E3
Kfar Menahem	1939	KA		D8

Kibbutz	Year founded	Affiliation	Former affiliation(s)	Map reference
Kfar Ruppim	1938	UKM	IKK, HK	G5
Kfar Szold	1942	UKM	KM	G1
Kinneret	1913	UKM	IKK, KM	G4
Kiriat Anavim	1920	UKM	IKK, HK	E8
Kishor	1980	KA		F2
Kissufim	1951	UKM	KM	B10
Kramim	1981	KA		D10
Kvutzat Schiller	1927	UKM	IKK, HK	D8
Lahav	1952	KA		D10
Lavi	1949	KD		G3
Lavon	1980	UKM		F2
Lehavot Habashan	1940	KA		G1
Lehavot Haviva	1949	KA		E5
Lohamei Hageta'ot	1949	UKM	KM	E2
Lotan	1983	UKM		C4
Lotem	1978	UKM	KM	F3
Ma'abarot	1933	KA		D5
Ma'agan	1949	UKM	IKK, KM	G4
Ma'agan Michael	1949	UKM	KM	D4
Ma'aleh Gilbo'a	1968	KD		F5
Ma'aleh Hahamisha	1938	UKM	IKK, HK	E8
Ma'aleh Tzvia	1986	UKM		F3
Ma'anit	1942	KA		E5
Ma'ayan Baruch	1942	UKM	IKK, KM	G1
Ma'ayan Tzvi	1938	UKM	IKK, HK	E4
Magal	1953	UKM	IKK	E5
Magen	1949	KA		B11
Mahanaim	1939	UKM	KM	G2
Malkia	1949	UKM	KM	G2
Malkishu'a	1982	KD		F, G5
Ma'oz Haim	1937	UKM	KM	G5
Mash'abei Sadeh	1949	UKM	KM	D12
Massada	1937	UKM	IKK, HK	G4
Mefalsim	1949	UKM	IKK, HK	C10
Megiddo	1949	KA		E4
Meitzar	1981	UKM		H3
Menara	1943	UKM	KM	G1
Merhavia	1909	KA	ind.	F4
Merom Golan	1967	UKM	KM	H2
Mesilot	1938	KA		G5
Metzer	1953	KA		E5
Metzuva	1940	UKM	IKK, HK	E2
Mevo Hamma	1968	UKM	IKK	G3
Migdal Oz	1977	KD		E9
Misgav Am	1945	UKM	KM	G1
Mishmar David	1949	UKM	IKK, HK	D8

Kibbutz	Year founded	Affiliation	Former affiliation(s)	Map reference
Mishmar Ha'emek	1922	KA		E4
Mishmar Hanegev	1946	UKM	KM	D10
Mishmar Hasharon	1933	UKM	IKK, HK	D5
Mishmarot	1933	UKM	IKK, HK	E5
Mitzpeh Shalem	1977	UKM	IKK	F9
Mizra	1923	KA	ind.	F4
Moran	1978	UKM	IKK	F3
Na'an	1930	UKM	KM	D8
Na'aran	1975	UKM	KM	G7
Nahal Oz	1953	UKM	IKK	C10
Nahsholim	1948	UKM	KM	D4
Nahshon	1950	KA		E8
Nahshonim	1949	KA		D, E7
Natur	1979	KA		H3
Negba	1939	KA		C9
Ne'ot Mordechai	1946	UKM	IKK, ind., KM	G1
Netiv Halamed-Hei	1949	UKM	KM	E9
Netzer Sereni	1948	UKM	IKK, KM	D8
Neveh Eitan	1938	UKM	IKK, HK	G5
Neveh Ilan ^b	1973	UKM	MS	E8
Neveh Or	1949	UKM	KM	G4
Neveh Yam	1939	UKM	IKK, HK	D4
Nir Am	1943	UKM	IKK, HK	C10
Nir David	1936	KA		G5
Nir Eliahu	1951	UKM	IKK	D, E6
Nir Oz	1955	KA		B11
Nir Yitzhak	1949	KA		B11
Nirim	1946	KA		B10
Nitzanim	1943	UKM	IKK, OZ	C8
Or Haner	1957	UKM	IKK	C9
Ortal	1978	UKM	KM	H2
Palmachim	1949	UKM	KM	C7, 8
Pelech	1980	KA		F2
Ramat David	1926	UKM	IKK, HK	F4
Ramat Hakovesh	1932	UKM	KM	D6
Ramat Hashofet	1941	KA		E4
Ramat Rahel	1926	UKM	KM, GA	F8
Ramat Yohanan	1931	UKM	IKK, HK	E3
Ramot Menashe	1948	KA		E4
Ravid	1982	UKM		G3
Regavim	1949	UKM	KM	E5
Regba ^b	1946	UKM	MS	E2
Re'im	1949	UKM	KM	B10
Reshafim	1944	KA		G5
Retamim	1979	UKM		C12
Revadim	1947	KA		D8

Kibbutz	Year founded	Affiliation	Former affiliation(s)	Map reference
Revivim	1943	UKM	KM	C12
Rosh Hanikra	1949	UKM	IKK, HK	E2
Rosh Tzurim	1969	KD		E9
Ruhama	1944	KA		C10
Sa'ad	1947	KD		C10
Sa'ar	1948	KA		E2
Samar	1976	KA		B4
Sarid	1926	KA	ind.	F4
Sasa	1949	KA		F2
Sdeh Boker	1952	UKM	IKK, ind.	B2
Sdeh Eliahu	1939	KD		G5
Sdeh Nahum	1937	UKM	KM	G4, 5
Sdeh Nehemia	1941	UKM	IKK, HK	G1
Sdeh Yoav	1966	KA		C9
S'dot Yam	1940	UKM	KM	D5
Sha'albim	1951	PAI		E8
Sha'ar Ha'amakim	1935	KA		E3
Sha'ar Hagolan	1937	KA		G4
Shamir	1944	KA		G1
Shefa'im	1935	UKM	KM	D6
Shizafon	1980	UKM		B4
Sh'luhot	1948	KD		G5
Shomrat	1948	KA		E2
Shorashim ^b	1982	UKM	MS	F3
Shuval	1946	KA		D10
Snir	1968	KA		H1
Sufa	1977	UKM	IKK	B11
Tel Katzir	1948	UKM	IKK, HK	G4
Tel Yitzhak	1938	UKM	IKK, OZ	D6
Tel Yosef	1922	UKM	IKK, KM, GA	F4
Telalim	1978	UKM	MS	D12
Tirat Zvi	1937	KD		G5
Tuval	1981	UKM	IKK	F2, 3
Tze'elim	1949	UKM	IKK, HK	C11
Tzor'a	1949	UKM	IKK, HK	E8
Tzova	1948	UKM	KM	E8
Urim	1946	UKM	IKK, HK	C11
Usha	1937	UKM	IKK, OZ	E3
Yad Hanna	1950	Maki		E5, 6
Yad Mordechai	1943	KA		C9
Yagur	1922	UKM	KM, ind.	E3
Yahel	1976	UKM	IKK	C4
Yakum	1947	KA		D6
Yas'ur	1949	KA		E3
Yavneh	1940	KD		D8
Yehiam	1946	KA		F2

Kibbutz	Year founded	Affiliation	Former affiliation(s)	Map reference
Yeitav	1976	UKM	IKK	G7
Yi'fat ⁱ	1952	UKM	IKK, HK	F4
Yiftah	1948	UKM	IKK, KM	G2
Yir'on	1949	UKM	KM	G2
Yizre'el	1948	UKM	IKK, HK	F4
Yodfat ^b	1960	UKM	MS	F3
Yorvata	1951	UKM	IKK	B4
Zikim	1949	KA		C9

Abbreviations

GA: Gedud Ha'avoda

HK: Hever Hakvutzot

IKK: Ihud Hakvutzot Vehakibbutzim

ind.: independent (not affiliated to a kibbutz movement)

KA: Kibbutz Artzi

KD: Kibbutz Dati

KM: Kibbutz Me'uhad

Maki: Miflaga Communistit Israelit: Israeli Communist Party

MS: *moshav shitufi* (formerly affiliated to the moshav movement)

OZ: Ha'oved Hatzioni

PAI: Po'alei Agudat Israel

UKM: United Kibbutz Movement

Notes

Former affiliations appear in reverse chronological order, most recent first.

^a Founded in 1941. The original group broke up, and it was re-founded in 1969.

^b Eight *moshavim shitufi'im*, now affiliated to the UKM, are included in this list.

^c In these cases a new kibbutz was founded by the Mapai group after the split in the Kibbutz Me'uhad.

^d Originally founded in the northern Negev, evacuated during the War of Independence, and re-founded on its present site in 1948.

^e Originally founded in the Etzion bloc, evacuated during the War of Independence, and re-founded on its present site in 1949.

^f Founded by the Mapai group of Giv'at Hashlosha after the split in the Kibbutz Me'uhad.

^g Founded in 1949. The original group broke up, and it was re-founded in 1965.

^h Founded in 1945. The original group broke up, and it was re-founded in 1974.

ⁱ Originally founded in 1936, and abandoned during the Arab revolt. Re-founded in 1943, conquered during the War of Independence, and re-founded in 1967.

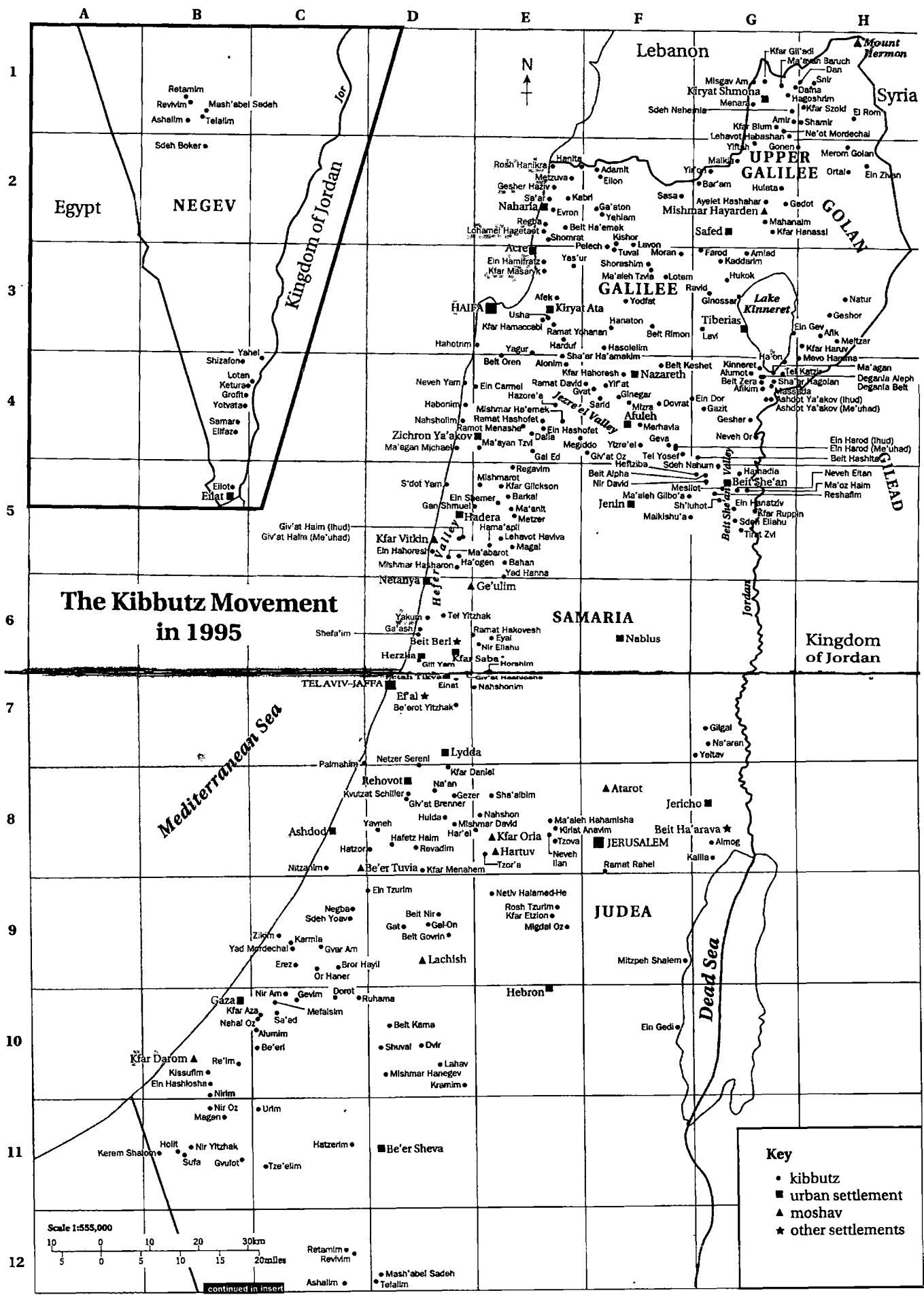
^j Founded by the members of two groups of Hever Hakvutzot (Kvutzat Hasharon and Ayanot) and the Mapai group of Gvat after the split in the Kibbutz Me'uhad.

Appendix 4
Guide to Other Settlements Mentioned in
this Volume

	Type of settlement	Map reference
Atarot	moshav	F8
Be'er Tuvia	moshav	C8
Beit Berl	seminar centre	D6
Beit Ha'arava	kibbutz (abandoned)	G8
Efal	Seminar centre	D7
Ge'ulim	moshav	E6
Hartuv	<i>moshava</i>	E8
Kfar Darom	moshav	B10
Kfar Oria	moshav	E8
Kfar Vitkin	moshav	D5
Lachish	moshav	D9
Mishmar Hayarden	moshav	G2

· *Map*

The Kibbutz Movement 1995



The Kibbutz Movement in 1995

- Key**
- kibbutz
 - urban settlement
 - ▲ moshav
 - ★ other settlements

Scale 1:555,000
 10 0 10 20 30km
 5 0 5 10 15 20miles

continued in insert

Glossary

Pronunciation is phonetic. The accent is usually on the last syllable. The consonant clusters *kh* or *ch*, and sometimes *h*, are pronounced as in Scottish loch or German *ich*. In these cases they appear underlined in the headword.

Ahdut Ha'avoda (Labour Unity) Party in the Yishuv, founded in 1919. Its original components were the Poalei Zion party, a group of workers previously unaffiliated to any party, and a minority from Hapoel Hatzair. It had a majority in the Histadrut from 1921 to 1930. Socialist, but not dogmatically Marxist. Supported Gedud Ha'avoda and the Kibbutz Me'uhad, but with reservations. Leaders: David Ben-Gurion, Berl Katznelson, David Remez, Yitzhak Tabenkin, Merged with Hapoel Hatzair in 1930 to form Mapai.

From 1946 the name was widely used, as it is used in this book, for the Ahdut Ha'avoda/Poalei Zion party created by the merger of L'ahdut Ha'avoda and Left Poalei Zion. In 1948 this party merged with Hashomer Hatzair to form Mapam, and was one of the component sections of that party until it split in 1954. From then on Ahdut Ha'avoda was again an independent party until it merged with Rafi and Mapai to form the Labour Party in 1968.

Akiva European Jewish youth movement that attempted to combine an element of (non-Orthodox) religion with pioneering. Attached politically to the General Zionist movement.

aliya (lit. ascent [to the Land of Israel]; pl. *aliyot*) Immigration, or wave of immigration, to Palestine or Israel. The accepted chronology is: First Aliya 1882-1903; Second Aliya 1904-14; Third Aliya 1918-23; Fourth Aliya 1924-8; Fifth Aliya 1929-36; Sixth Aliya 1936-9.

Ashkenazi (pl. Ashkenazim) Jew originating in eastern or central Europe, as distinct from the Sephardi Jews of Middle Eastern or Asian origin.

B'nei Akiva (Children of Akiva) Orthodox youth movement, affiliated to the Hapoel Hamizrachi party. Its graduates join the Kibbutz Dati.

briha (escape) The movement of Jews from Europe to Palestine after the Second World War.

Dror (Freedom) (a) A small group of Zionist activists who left Russia for Poland in the early 1920s and who played a major part in the leadership of Hechalutz and, after arriving in Palestine, of the Kibbutz Me'uhad. (b) A movement formed in 1939 by the unification of Hechalutz Hatzair and

Freiheit (a mainly Yiddish-speaking pioneering youth movement). Affiliated to the Kibbutz Me'uhad.

dunam 1,000 square metres (approximately a quarter of an acre).

Federation of Kibbutz Movements (Brit Hatnua Hakibbutzit) Federative organization of all the kibbutz movements. Originally founded in 1937, but quickly became moribund until re-founded in 1963. Acts as representative body of all of the kibbutz movements on matters about which they are unanimous, and organizes activities in areas of common interest, such as culture and education.

Gadna (Gedudei Noar: youth battalions) Youth section of the Hagana and later of the IDF.

gar'in (lit. nucleus; pl. *gar'inim*) Group of people, usually youth movement graduates, formed with the aim of creating or settling on a kibbutz.

Gedud Ha'avoda (Labour Battalion) The first nationwide kibbutz movement, 1921-9.

General Zionists Originally members of the Zionist movement in the Diaspora with no party affiliations. From 1931, organized as an autonomous Zionist party. It was subject to many schisms, and from 1934 there were two parties, which came to be known as General Zionists A (pro-Histadrut) and B (anti-Histadrut).

Gordonia Zionist youth movement, founded in 1924 in Galicia. Drawing its inspiration from Aharon David Gordon, it advocated non-Marxist socialism. From 1932 it was associated with Hever Hakvutzot. Leader: Pinhas Lavon (Lubianiker).

Gush Emunim (Bloc of the Faithful) A non-party movement composed mainly of religious Jews, founded in 1967, which advocated settlement in all parts of the occupied territories and organized such settlement.

hachshara (pl. *hachsharot*) Training for kibbutz life; a group undergoing such training.

hachshara meguyeset (mobilized training-group) Group engaged in military and agricultural activities, in the framework of the Palmach.

Hagana (Defence) Clandestine Jewish defence organization in the Yishuv, from 1920. Controlled at first by L'ahdut Ha'avoda, and from 1921 by the Histadrut. In 1931 its controlling body was broadened to include representatives of all parts of the Yishuv. In 1948 it was renamed the Israel Defence Force (Zva Hagana LeYisrael, or Zahal).

Haggada The text read at the ceremony on the eve of Passover.

Hamahanot Ha'olim (lit. the ascending hosts, or camps: an untranslatable name symbolizing a synthesis of scouting and Zionism) Zionist youth movement in the Yishuv, associated from 1932 with the Kibbutz Me'uhad.

- Hanoar Hatzioni (Zionist Youth)** Non-socialist pioneering youth movement, active in eastern and central Europe from the early 1930s.
- Ha'oved Hatzioni (the Zionist Worker)** Organization of settlements of the Hanoar Hatzioni youth movement. Non-socialist, but supported the Histadrut. Leader: Moshe Kolodny (Kol).
- Hapoel Hamizrachi (the Mizrachi Worker)** Left-wing section of the Mizrachi religious Zionist movement.
- Hapoel Hatzair (the Young Worker)** Anti-Marxist socialist Zionist party, founded in Palestine in 1905. Advocated revival of Hebrew culture, immigration to Palestine, and agricultural work. Supported *kvutzot* (as against big kibbutzim) and moshavim. Leaders: A. D. Gordon, Joseph Sprinzak, Haim Arlosorov. Combined with Ahdut Ha'avoda in 1930 to form Mapai.
- Hashomer Hatzair (the Young Guard)** Pioneering Zionist youth movement founded in 1917. Adopted Marxism in the 1920s. Today, as then, its graduates join the kibbutzim of the Kibbutz Artzi. Leaders: Meir Ya'ari, Ya'akov Hazan.
- havura** (a) In the Third Aliya, an umbrella organization uniting a number of *plugot*. (b) In the period of unemployment during the Fourth Aliya, an individual *pluga* or group of *plugot*.
- he'ahzut** (pl. *he'ahzuyot*; lit. holding unit) Temporary settlement, intended to occupy and defend an area destined for permanent settlement at a later time. During the Second World War they were mostly set up by Palmach groups; after the establishment of the State of Israel they came under the auspices of the Nahal.
- Hechalutz (the Pioneer)** Founded in 1917 as an organization for preparing young people (minimum age 17) for immigration to Palestine. It organized training farms, allocated immigration certificates to trainees, etc. Other Jewish youth movements were affiliated to Hechalutz from the late 1920s onwards, so that it came to function as an umbrella organization.
- Hechalutz Hatzair (the Young Pioneer)** Pioneering youth movement preparing young people for membership of Hechalutz, immigration to Palestine, and kibbutz membership. Attached to the Kibbutz Me'uhad.
- Herut.** See Revisionist Party
- Hever Hakvutzot (Union of Kvutzot)** The third-biggest kibbutz movement (1929–52).
- Histadrut** (officially Hahistadrut Haklalit shel Ha'ovdim Ha'ivri'im be'Eretz-Yisrael: the General Organization of Jewish Workers in the Land of Israel) Central organization of the labour movement, founded in January 1921. Combines trade union functions and constructive activities—ownership of industries and co-operative enterprises, support for kibbutzim and moshavim

—with cultural activities and social services. General secretaries in the period considered in this volume: David Remez, Yitzhak Sprinzak, Pinhas Lavon, Aharon Becker, Yitzhak Ben-Aharon, Yeruham Meshel, Israel Keisar.

Ihud (Union) Frequently used name for Ihud Hakvutzot Vehakibbutzim (Union of Kvutzot and Kibbutzim), formed in 1951 by the merger of Hever Hakvutzot and the Mapai sector of the Kibbutz Me'uhad.

Israel Defence Force (IDF). *See* Hagana

IZL (Irgun Zva'i Leumi: National Military Organization) Independent underground military organization active from 1931 to 1940 and loosely associated with the Revisionist Party. Pursued an activist anti-British policy in opposition to the Histadrut and the Hagana.

Jewish Agency Founded in 1929 to promote the development of the Jewish national home in Palestine. Though officially non-Zionist, it became effectively a part of the Zionist movement.

Jewish Brigade British army unit in the Second World War, set up in 1944 and consisting of Jewish (mainly Palestinian) volunteers.

Jewish National Fund Founded by the Zionist Organization in 1901 in order to raise funds from the Jewish people and buy land which would remain under public ownership while leased to those who cultivated it.

Joint American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (also known as JDC: Joint Distribution Committee). American charitable organization promoting relief, social work, and rehabilitation among persecuted Jews and refugees.

Judenrat (pl. Judenräte) Council of Jews appointed by the Nazis to administer a ghetto in occupied Europe.

kabbalat shabbat Ceremony celebrating the commencement of the Sabbath.

Keren Hayesod (Foundation Fund) Fund established by the Zionist movement to provide equipment and start-up capital for new settlements.

kibbutz (pl. kibbutzim) (*a*) Large communal settlement, combining agriculture with industry, as opposed to the small, entirely agricultural *kvutza*. (*b*) Federation of communal groups (*plugot*, *havurot*, etc.) and/or settlements, for example the Kibbutz Me'uhad.

Kibbutz Artzi (full name Kibbutz Artzi shel Hashomer Hatzair: the National Kibbutz [Movement] of Hashomer Hatzair) Founded in 1927 by graduates of Hashomer Hatzair. *See* Hashomer Hatzair for leaders, political attitudes, etc.

Kibbutz Dati (the Religious Kibbutz Movement) Orthodox Jewish kibbutz movement, affiliated politically to Hapoel Hamizrachi.

Kibbutz Me'uhad (United Kibbutz [Movement]) Founded in 1927 by the

unification of kibbutz Ein-Harod with a number of smaller groups. Principles: large kibbutzim based on agriculture and industry, and continuous expansion. Among its leaders were Yitzhak Tabenkin, Aharon Tzising, Yitzhak Ben-Aharon, and Israel Galili.

kvutza (pl. *kvutzot*) (a) Communal working group whose members contract to work for a defined time or objective. (b) Small, permanently settled, purely agricultural communal group.

Labour Party (Mifleget Ha'avoda) Formed in 1968 by the merger of Mapai, Ahdut Ha'avoda, and Rafi, it was the leading party in the Israeli government and Israeli politics until 1977. Since then it has been alternately in power and opposition. Among its leaders have been Shimon Peres, Yitzhak Rabin, Golda Meir, and Moshe Dayan.

L'ahdut Ha'avoda (full name Hatnua L'ahdut Ha'avoda: the Movement for Labour Unity) Party created by Faction B (the Kibbutz Me'uhad and its urban allies) after it left Mapai in 1944. Joined with Left Poalei Zion in 1946 to form Ahdut Ha'avoda/Poalei Zion (called in this book Ahdut Ha'avoda). In 1948 the party merged with Hashomer Hatzair to form Mapam.

Left Poalei Zion Splinter party of Poalei Zion. A small Marxist group which drew its inspiration from the Communist movement, though still supporting Zionism. During the Second World War it drew closer to the mainstream of the Zionist movement, and in 1946 combined with L'ahdut Ha'avoda.

Lehi (Lohamei Herut Israel: Fighters for the Freedom of Israel) Extreme anti-British underground resistance movement (also known as the Stern Gang, after its leader Avraham Stern).

Likud (Consolidation) Parliamentary bloc formed in 1973 by Herut, the Liberals, and some smaller parties, which came to power in 1977. Favours Israeli control of conquered territories and opposes socialist policies. Led by Menachem Begin and, later, Yitzhak Shamir and Benjamin Netanyahu.

ma'abara (pl. *ma'abarot*) Temporary settlement for new immigrants during the period of mass immigration.

Maccabi Hatzair (the Young Maccabees) Pioneering youth movement active mainly in Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia; affiliated to Hever Hakvutzot.

mamlachtiut (lit. sovereignty) Doctrine, particularly associated with Ben-Gurion, which emphasizes the central role of the state in Israeli society.

Mapai (Mifleget Poalei Eretz-Israel: Workers' Party of the Land of Israel) Leading party in the Labour Zionist movement and, from the mid-1930s, in the Zionist movement, the Yishuv, and—until it became the leading element in the Israeli Labour Party in 1968—the State of Israel. Leaders include David Ben-Gurion, Berl Katznelson, Moshe Sharett.

- Mapam** (Mifleget Hapoalim Hame'uhedet: United Workers' Party) Formed in 1948 by a merger between Hashomer Hatzair and Ahdut Ha'avoda.
- metapelet** (pl. *metaplot*) (Female) child-care worker and educator.
- military government** System of regulations and department of the Israel Defence Force through which the Arab citizens of Israel were governed from 1949 until 1966.
- Min Hayesod** (From the Foundation) Small group which left Mapai in the mid-1960s for about two years in support of Pinhas Lavon.
- mitzpeh** (pl. *mitzvim*: lit. look-out post) Experimental settlement in the Negev, established during the Second World War. From the early 1980s this name was given to small new settlements with a variety of social structures, mainly in Western and Central Galilee.
- moshav** (pl. *moshavim*) Smallholders' settlement, based on family holdings and a wide measure of co-operation in marketing and purchasing.
- moshav shitufi** (pl. *moshavim shitufi'im*: co-operative moshav) Settlement farmed communally (like a kibbutz). Members live in family units, and income is distributed according to family size. Also known as *meshakim shitufi'im*.
- moshava** Village based on family units, with no institutionalized co-operation.
- Mossad** (full name Mossad Le'aliya Beit: Institute for Alternative Immigration) Set up in 1939 to organize illegal immigration of Jews to Palestine. Later it helped to organize the *briha*. From 1951 this name was used for the Mossad Lemodi'in: the Israeli intelligence service.
- Nahal** (Noar Halutzi Lohem: Pioneering and Fighting Youth) Agricultural corps of Israeli army.
- Netzah** (Noar Tsofi Halutzi: Pioneering Scouting Youth) Independent youth movement created by the Russian Hashomer Hatzair after its break with the main movement in 1930. Affiliated to the Kibbutz Me'uhad from 1927.
- Noar Oved** (Working Youth) Major youth movement of the Histadrut, combining educational and trade union functions. Groups of its graduates joined the Kibbutz Me'uhad from 1929 onwards. Most prominent leader: Israel Galili.
- Palmach** (Plugot Mahatz: Striking Units) Crack unit of the Hagana from 1941 to 1948 which combined military duties with work on the kibbutzim.
- pluga** (pl. *plugot*) Communal group whose members worked as hired labourers, usually with the intention of settling permanently as a kibbutz when land became available.
- Poalei Zion** (Workers of Zion) Socialist (mainly Marxist) Zionist party. Originated in the Diaspora at the turn of the century. The Yishuv branch

became the leading group in the labour movement from 1906 until 1919, when it disbanded to join Ahdut Ha'avoda. Leaders: David Ben-Gurion, Yitzhak Ben-Zvi. In 1920 the world movement split, and the leftist faction became a very small independent party (Left Poalei Zion).

Rafi (Reshimat Poalei Israel: Israel Workers' List) Led by David Ben-Gurion and Moshe Dayan, this party broke away from Mapai in the wake of the Lavon affair. In 1968 it merged with Mapai and Ahdut Ha'avoda to form the Labour Party.

Revisionist Party Oppositionist party in the World Zionist Organization which demanded revision of the terms of the Mandate in order to make the aim of creating a Jewish state explicit. It opposed partition of the country (including the exclusion of Transjordan from the Jewish state), and strongly opposed Mapai and the Histadrut. It left the World Zionist Organization in 1934 and rejoined in 1944. Leader: Vladimir Jabotinsky. The Revisionists' successor in the State of Israel was Herut, led by Menachem Begin.

sabra (cactus fruit) Jewish person born in Palestine or Israel; said to be, like the cactus fruit, prickly on the outside, but with a soft heart.

Scouts (Hatsofim) Youth movement similar to the British Boy Scouts and Girl Guides. In Mandatory Palestine it was divided into Jewish and Arab sections. The Jewish section gradually adopted an ideology similar to that of the other pioneering youth movements, and from the mid-1940s its graduates joined and founded kibbutzim.

Sephardi (pl. Sephardim) Jew of Middle Eastern or Asian origin, as opposed to the Ashkenazim of eastern Europe.

Socialist League (Liga Sotzialistit) Political party active from 1936 to 1944, allied to Hashomer Hatzair.

Tnua Me'uhedet (United [Youth] Movement) Pioneering youth movement in the Yishuv, formed in 1945 by Gordonia and the Mapai section of Hamaḥanot Ha'olim.

ulpan (pl. *ulpanim*) School for teaching Hebrew to new immigrants.

United Kibbutz Movement (UKM: Hatnua Hakibbutzit Hame'uhedet) Kibbutz movement formed in 1980 by the merger of the Ihud and the Kibbutz Me'uhad.

Yishuv Jewish community of Palestine before the establishment of the State of Israel.

Youth Aliya A scheme established in 1934 to bring young refugees from the Nazis to Palestine and educate them. Many were absorbed into the kibbutzim.

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