# POLITICS AND SOCIETY IN ISRAEL

## IRE215

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Session 4

Maya Hadar

# On The Agenda for Today

- **The Yishuv (pre-state Jewish Community in Palestine)**

- **First Years of Statehood**

  - The Histadrut, the Hagana

  - The Yishuv as a democratic society

- **Nation building 1948-1967**
  - The Kibbutz

  - The 'new Jew'

  - The Revival of the Hebrew language

# Jewish Immigration to Mandatory Palestine

- **Five** organized immigration waves

**The First Aliya (Immigration wave)**

- Followed **pogroms** (violent riots of **Jewish prosecution**) in **Russia** in 1881-1882
- Most of the **Olim** (**immigrants**) came from **Eastern Europe**
- **Inexperienced idealists** => **Most** were **members** of "**Hibbat Zion**" and "**Bilu**", early **Zionist movements**
- **Encountered many difficulties** => inclement climate, disease, crippling Turkish taxation and Arab opposition
- Required **economic assistance** => S**upported by** Baron Edmond de **Rothschild**
- Nearly **35k** arrived, half left

# Jewish Immigration to Mandatory Palestine

## The Second Aliya (1905-1915)

- Followed **pogroms** in Russia + increasing **anti-Semitism**

- Most immigrants were **young people** inspired by **socialist ideals**

- Many models & components of rural settlements came into being => the first **kibbutz, *Ha-Shomer*,** the first Jewish self-defense organization

- **Tel Aviv:** the first modern all-Jewish city

- **The Hebrew language** was revived as a spoken tongue, Hebrew literature + newspapers published

- Political **parties** + **workers'** agricultural **organizations** began to form => Led the "Yishuv" into statehood

# Jewish Immigration to Mandatory Palestine

## The Third Aliya (1919-1923)

- Triggered by:
  - The **October/Bolshevik Revolution** in **Russia** + pogroms there, in **Poland, Hungary**
  - The **British mandate** in Palestine + the **Balfour Declaration**

- Most immigrants were **young halutzim** (**pioneers**) from Eastern Europe
- Built roads and towns + undertook major projects (draining of marshes)
- Founded the General Federation of Labor (Histadrut), **Elected Assembly** + **National Council**: representative institutions for the Yishuv, the **Haganah**: clandestine Jewish defense organization
- Agricultural settlement expanded; first industrial enterprises established

# Jewish Immigration to Mandatory Palestine

**The Forth Aliya (1924-1927)**

- A direct result of the economic crisis and anti-Jewish policies in Poland, along with the introduction of stiff immigration quotas by the United States

- Most immigrants belonged to the **middle class** and brought modest sums of **capital** with which they established small businesses and workshops => strengthened the towns, industrial development and reinstate Jewish labor in the villages

- 82k arrived, 23k left

# Jewish Immigration to Mandatory Palestine

**The Fifth Aliya (1929-1939)**

- Main trigger => **Nazi accession to power** in Germany (1933)

- Increased immigration from **Germany** (professionals) and resumed immigration from **Eastern Europe** due to **persecution** and the Jews' **worsening situation**

- 1933-1936 => 174k, Jews settled in Palestine

- Towns flourished, new industrial enterprises were founded, construction of the Haifa port and the oil refineries was completed

- By 1940, nearly 250k Jews arrived (20k left), the Yishuv's population reached 450k

# First Years of Statehood

**The 'Yishuv'**

- **Jewish community** in mandatory Palestine **1922-1948**

- Grew from about **80k** to **650k**

- Labor/Revisionist/General **Zionism**

- <u>Who were they?</u>

- <u>Where did they come from and why?</u>

- <u>What challenges did they have to face?</u>

- **What made the Yishuv viable?**

# The Yishuv (Pre-state Jewish Community)

**What made the Yishuv viable? => Institutions**

- The Yishuv was headed by a **two-winged system of national institutions,** based on independence + sovereignty of Jews in Palestine

- **Dual role: Conducting day-to-day life in an autonomous setting +** constructing the **infrastructure** for an **independent Jewish state**

- **Umbrella** => **Zionist organizations,** recognized as the sole representative of the Jewish people in all matters relating to Palestine

- The most **powerful** & **influential** body in the Yishuv was the **Palestine Zionist Executive**

# The Yishuv (Pre-state Jewish Community)

- The Yishuv functioned as a **parliamentary democracy,** formally having all three branches of government:

  1. The **parliament**: "National Assembly"
  2. The **executive** organ: "the National council/committee"
  3. The **judicial system**: "the Hebrew Court of Peace"

- Within a few years, the status of the **Hebrew legal system** declined =>

  - **Limited** scope of **jurisdiction** (rabbinical courts: personal matters only)
  - **Voluntary character,** Jews relied on the efficient Mandatory judicial system
  - **Lack of coercive means** for enforcement of decisions

# The Yishuv (Pre-state Jewish Community)

- April 1920 => First elections to the **National Assembly**:, after resolving the issue of the women's right to vote

  - The Orthodox community + the "Mizrahi" **opposed participation of women** in the democratic process

  - After deliberation, agreed that **only men** would vote in the orthodox quarters, but each vote would **count as two** (compensate for the women)

  - While the **religious Zionist parties eventually** agreed with the **inclusion of women,** the **Ultra-orthodox** quit the assembly + didn't take part in its elections

  - Elections to the National Assembly should have been held every four years, but were only held in 1925, 1931, 1944

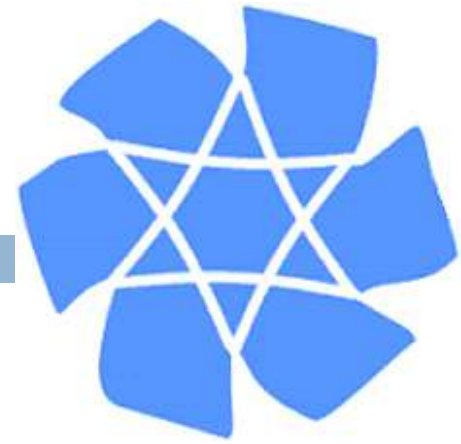# The Yishuv (Pre-state Jewish Community)

- The Mandatory government granted the **Zionist Organization** (=> the Jewish Agency) **partial authority** over matters customarily handled by the **government** in independent states (immigration, settlement, economic development and even some military issues)

- The **Yishuv institutions** (Zionist organs) **dealt with internal matters** (education, health, welfare)

- **Political weakness** due to **factionalism** => 20 lists competed for 28,765 potential voters (77% participation) => prevented the crystallization of a power center with strong public backing

# The Yishuv (Pre-state Jewish Community)

- The **Rabbinical Council** was the **religious organ** of the Yishuv, officially recognized by the Mandatory power

- **Local Rabbinical Councils** + **Rabbinical courts** (jurisdiction over matters of personal status) existed in all cities/towns with a substantial Jewish population

# The 'Histadrut' (1920)

- The **General Federation of Jewish** [Hebrew] **Laborers** in Palestine

- A **trade** & **labor union**, aimed at organizing the economic activities of Jewish workers

- Operated as a **trade union** + **employer** + ran a **job placement** agency

- Had its own **economic institutions** (bank, insurance company, pension fund) + provided **health care**

- Had its own **education system**, a daily **newspaper**, a **publishing house** and a **theatre** group

# The 'Histadrut' (1920)



- **Founding members** influenced by Russian-Jewish **socialist tradition-** firmly believed that the **representatives of the workers should not earn more than the workers themselves**

- 1920: 4,400 members, 1922: 8,394, 1927: 25k members: 75% of the entire Jewish labor force

- **"A state within the state in the making"**

- Maintained a **powerful position in Israeli society** since its inception

# The 'Histadrut' (1920)

The Histadrut was **responsible** for the **absorption** of Jewish **immigrants** =>
'**Labor Zionism**'

# The 'Histadrut' (1920)

- For many years, the **Histadrut** was **in charge of** the Hagana (militia)

- Played a **central role** in organizing **illegal Jewish immigration to Palestine** in defiance of Mandatory laws

- The **Histadrut leadership** became the **dominant political force** in the Yishuv, and in the **Zionist organization** (1930s onwards) => the Histadrut's activity **complemented** the the Yishuv's

# The 'Hagana'

- A **militia**/ underground paramilitary arm of the 'Histadrut'

- Emerged from the reality of **rural self-help,** formed against **Arab violence**

- Founded by **Ben Gurion** and **Ben Tzvi** in 1907; by 1914 had four squads', by 1936 had 3k men and women at arms

# The Yishuv as a Democratic Society

- The Yishuv featured almost **all attributes of a democratic** state, **except sovereignty**

- **Organized + functioned** along the lines of a **parliamentary democracy** (even the **Hagana** was subject to the **control** + **authority** of the democratically elected **civil leadership**)

- **Impressed** the various committees that investigated the situation in Palestine (Peel Commission:1937, UN Special Committee on Palestine:1947)

- The **strong institutional structure** established by the **Yishuv** was later manifested in the **smooth transfer from foreign rule an independent state**

# The Yishuv as a Democratic Society

**What were the sources of inspiration for the Yishuv's democratic practices?**

- The **self-governing tradition** of **Jewish communities** in the **Diaspora**

  - The **Zionist Organization:** functioned in a democratic manner since its inception (1897)

- The **Mandatory power** => Britain (parliamentary democratic)

- The **Zionist movement** needed to gain the **support** of **public opinion** in **democratic states-** was attuned to the values of such states and views of the Jewish communities that supported the Yishuv (politically + financially)

# The Yishuv as a Democratic Society

**What were the sources of inspiration for the Yishuv's democratic practices?**

- It's **voluntary character** => Unlike a sovereign government with **coercion** authority, was based on free will & persuasion

**Countervailing sources of influence**

- Most of Yishuv members + leaders **lived under totalitarian regimes**

- Certain circles in the Yishuv **admired the Soviet Revolution** & accepted the notion of **"the dictatorship of the proletariat"**

- The **Jewish religion itself contains non-democratic elements** (unequivocal reliance on the Halacha: Jewish religious law)

# The Yishuv as a Democratic Society

- **Democratic sources of influence toned down the opposing factors** => the Yishuv acted as a formal **democracy** (majority rule)

- The Yishuv was **spared dilemmas faced by liberal democracies** (minority rights) since such issues were **outside its authority**

- The **lack of sovereignty** had a **positive effect** on sustaining the democratic character of the Yishuv => Mandatory gov. in charge

  - Yishuv didn't need to build and maintain **infrastructure**
  - **Increased internal cohesiveness,** strengthened by the conflict with the Arabs
  - The Mandatory regime provided a **protective umbrella** that enabled Yishuv + its institutions to gradually expand and strengthen

# The Kibbutz



- **Cooperative** form of **settlement,** unique to **Zionism** and the State of Israel

- Based on the **Zionist** aspiration to re-establish **Jewish presence** in **Israel** under **socialist values** => **Equality** between people + economic & ideological cooperation



- Established as a **social** + **economic unit, property** and **means of production** are **communally owned**

- Decisions are made by the general assembly

# Features of a Kibbutz

1949



- A relatively **gated community**

- **Small** (usually 300-1000 people)

- Historically **based on agriculture**

- The kibbutzim started as **utopian communities** that advocated the full **cooperation** of **property** and **equality,** both in **production** & **consumption**

- The slogan of the classic kibbutz was the **communist** slogan: **"*From each one according to his ability and to each according to his needs*"**

# Features of a Kibbutz

- **Sharing property and responsibility** => the kibbutz society was based on the **"common fund"** that meets the needs of its members

  - While **demanding** from its members **responsibility** and **commitment to the community,** the kibbutz **provides** them with their **needs** from **infancy to old age**

  - Based on the premise of **equality of human value** => the right of a person to satisfy his needs stems from the fact that he is a **human being** and **should not depend on his physical** ability/technical/managerial skills or the wealth of his family

# Features of a Kibbutz


israel images

- Members had **no individual property**

- The kibbutz **enabled territorial extension**

- Created **Jewish peasants**

Ein Hashofet, 1947

- The kibbutzim served as a **central tool for the realization of Zionism** and were considered the **social elite of the Yishuv** in the first years of statehood



- Provided the **image of a heroic Zionist pioneer**

- Provided **manpower** for the nucleus of an **army**

Women Kibbutzniks

# The "New Jew"

An attempt to create a **dichotomy** between the **'new Jew'** and the **Exile Jew**

## The New Jew =>

- Strong and brave
- Farmer/worker
- Socialist
- Village dweller
- Into Sports/hiking
- Rooted in the land
- Normalized

Adaptation of "Non-Jewish" image

## The Exile Jew =>

- Nervous and afraid
- Merchant/banker
- Capitalist
- Urban
- Talmud learning (religious studies)
- Easily wandering
- Different, not-normal, foreign

Adaptation of anti-Semite image

# The "New Jew"

An attempt to create a **dichotomy** between the **'new Jew'** and the **Exile Jew**

**The New Jew =>**                    **The Exile Jew =>**

# The Decline of the Kibbutz

- **Political issues** =>
  - The **internal political strife** among + within Kibbutzim
  - The **fragmentation of Labor Party**

- **Economical issues** =>
  - **Capitalization after the 1970s,** liberalism, neo-liberalism and massive urbanization
  - **Agriculture** => Industry (+economic crisis) => hi-tech

- **Social issues** =>
  - The **decline** of the **Kibbutz** as an **Elite**
  - The Settler, Halutz/ Pioneer **myth has changed-** from Labor to Occupation

# The Decline of the Kibbutz

- While less than 2% of Israelis live in Kibbutzim (267 settlements), their share in **production** far exceeded this proportion:

    - Grow 16% farm produce

    - Manufacture about 4% industrial output (excluding diamonds)

# The Decline of the Kibbutz

**Nowadays …**

- Kibbutzim are **diversifying their production branches**, expanding into various kinds of industry and services

  - Tourist facilities, catering and factory outlet stores have recently become an important part of the **kibbutz economy**

  - The Kibbutz is currently seeking ways to meet the **challenges** of **modern life** in the technological age while maintaining its **original egalitarian framework** => the ability to **adapt** is the key to its survival

# The Hebrew Language

- **Yiddish** => **Common language** of European Jews (-Ashkenazi)

- **Hebrew** => A written (not spoken) language which appear in the bible + prayer (not spoken)
  - Biblical Hebrew had to be made **vernacular**

- The **revival** of the **Hebrew language,** an outstanding socio-linguistic event, is attributed to **Eliezer Ben-Yehuda**

- (**Modern**) **Hebrew** created a **common culture** and 'a cut' from the past



| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Yod (Y) | Tet (T) | Chet (Ch) | Zayin (Z) | Vav (V) | He (H) | Dalet (D) | Gimel (G) | Bet (B/V) | Alef (silent) |
| Ayin (silent) | Samech (S) | Nun (N) | Nun (N) | Mem (M) | Mem (M) | Lamed (L) | Khaf (Kh) | Kaf (K/Kh) | |
| Tav (T) | Shin (Sh/S) | Resh (R) | Qof (Q) | Tsadeh (Ts) | Tsadeh (Ts) | Feh (F) | Peh (P/F) | | |

# The Revival of the Hebrew Language

- Eliezer **Ben-Yehuda** (1858, Lithuania)

- Started learning **Hebrew** from a tender age as part of a **religious upbringing,** excelled and sent to a Talmudic academy (*yeshiva*)

- Became interested in the secular world, eventually dropped out of yeshiva

- Deeply **influenced** by the **revival of European nationhood in the 19th centaury** (Greeks: 1829, Italians: 1849, Bulgarians: 1877), **captivated** by the ideas of **restoring national rights** + **reviving** a **nation** in its **'home'** territory

# The Revival of the Hebrew Language

- Believed that European **national fulfilment** should also be **applied** to his people, **the Jews**

- **Published articles in Hebrew** periodicals on the triple Jewish renaissance (people, land, language); Zionism

- 1881 => arrived in Palestine, settled in Jerusalem: used it as a 'base' for spreading his revivalist ideas throughout **Palestine** + the Jewish **Diaspora**

- His **action plan** => "Hebrew at Home," "Hebrew at School" "Words, Words, Words"

# The Revival of the Hebrew Language

- **"Hebrew at Home"** => Spoke Hebrew with every Jew he met (even in Europe)

  - Some Jews **could speak Hebrew** (not perfect), but **lacked words** on certain topics, wasn't their main language

- Wanted the Jews in Palestine to speak **Hebrew exclusively**

*"If a language which has stopped being spoken ... can return and be the spoken tongue of an individual for all necessities of his life, there is no room for doubt that it can become the spoken language of a community."*

# The Revival of the Hebrew Language

- 1882 => Ben Yehuda fathered a son: **Itamar/Ben Zion** => First **all-Hebrew speaking child** in modern history

  - **Important symbolic event for the future of the revival**

- Ben-Yehuda took **drastic precautions** so that Itamar will only hear + speak Hebrew => Exclusion and isolation

- **Itamar** started **speaking late**

- A child in the house accentuated the need to find appropriate **Hebrew words** for the **mundane** things of everyday life => doll, ice-cream, jelly, towel, bicycle …

# The Revival of the Hebrew Language

- Ben-Yehuda and his Hebrew-speaking family became a **living legend,** an **embodiment** of the **revival** for others to emulate

- "Hebrew at School" => Most important

- Ben-Yehuda preached that rabbis + teachers should use **Hebrew as the language of instruction** in Jewish schools in Palestine for all subjects (religious + secular)

- Argued that **the revival could succeed only if the younger generation would begin to speak Hebrew freely** (taught In a Jewish school in Jerusalem)

- **Necessity** of using **Hebrew** at school => children from several **different Jewish communities** studied together, **no common language**

# The Revival of the Hebrew Language

- Method of teaching **Hebrew through Hebrew**, a direct system, no translation into other tongues

- Ben-Yehuda only taught for a short time, but was **successful** => After just a few months, **children were able to chatter fluently in Hebrew on daily topics**

- Ben-Yehuda's **personal example** and his **teaching success** made a great impression on other teachers

- **Problems** => Lack of trained teachers, textbooks, learning aids (games/songs), solved with time => Young **all-Hebrew speaking generation emerged** => **Successful revival**

# The Revival of the Hebrew Language

- 1884 => started publishing his own **newspaper** '**Hatzvi**' to serve as an **instrument for teaching modern Hebrew to adults** (all topics)

- Believed that if he will sell the newspaper at a **low price**, people will buy I and become **convinced** of their **ability** to **fully express** themselves in **Hebrew**

- Used the **newspaper** to **introduce new words** to the public (newspaper, editor, telegram, soldier, fashion)

- **Jews** being **avid readers,** Ben-Yehuda's **newspaper** did **much** to **spread** his **linguistic coinages** (both in Palestine and in the Diaspora)

# The Revival of the Hebrew Language

- As long as Ben-Yehuda **spoke Hebrew at home**/with his friends, he was able to use the language more or less **as he wished,** but he wanted the **entire society to use Hebrew** => words must be precise and accurate, according to **strict philological rules**

- Ben-Yehuda became a **scientific lexicographer** => compiled a **dictionary**

  - 17 volume: "**A Complete Dictionary of Ancient and Modern Hebrew**", completed by his second wife and son after his death

- **Fun fact**: Many words invented by Ben Yehuda are based on the sound the object makes ("BAKBUK"- bottle, "Zvuv"-fly)
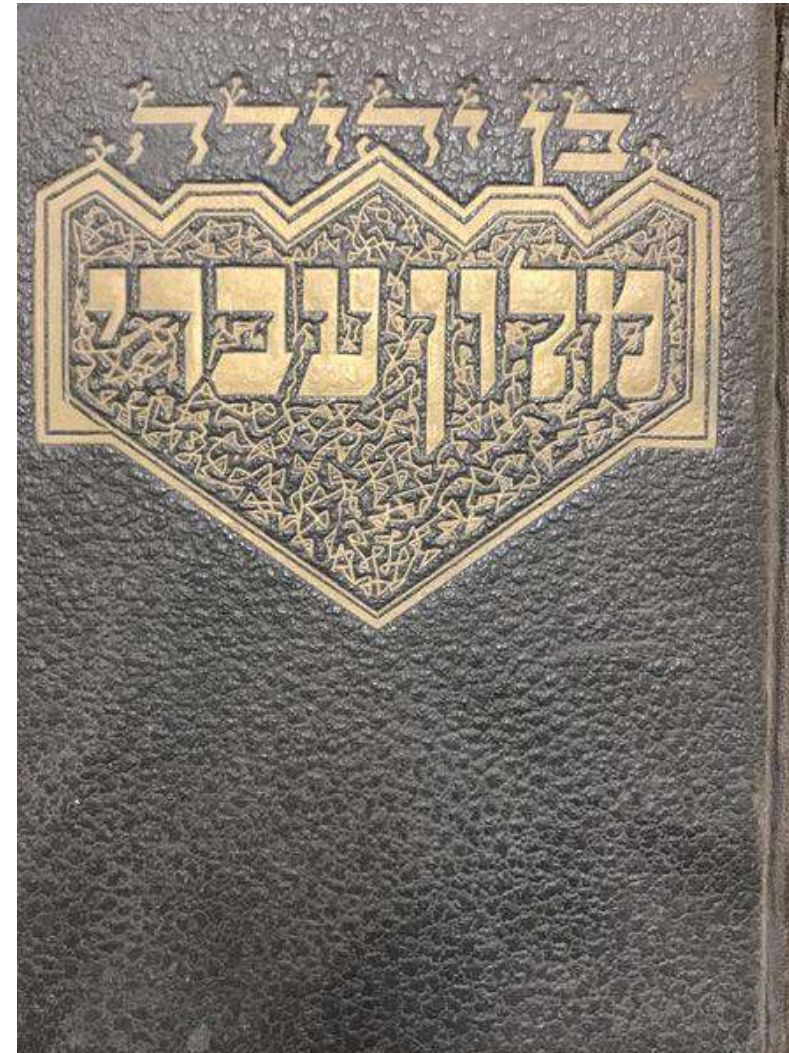
# The Revival of the Hebrew Language

- 1890 => **Hebrew Language Council**, founded to solve linguistic issues (pronunciation, spelling punctuation)

  - Forerunner of today's '**Hebrew Language Academy**'

- Ben-Yehuda did not revive the language **along** => was supported by the **society** around him + other **scholars**

  - **Local population** was hostile at times

  - Young, educated, idealistic Jewish immigrants from Europe => **Receptive** to his **ideas**

# The Revival of the Hebrew Language

- In the forty years between 1881-1921, a core of young Hebrew-language speakers was formed => **Hebrew as a unique symbol of their linguistic nationalism**

- 1922 => The **British mandate** authorities recognized **Hebrew** as the **official language of the Jews in Palestine**

  - Ben Yehuda died a month later

# The Revival of the Hebrew Language

*"For everything there is needed **only one wise, clever and active man**, with the initiative to devote all his energies to it, and the matter will progress, all obstacles in the way notwithstanding... In every new event, every step, even the smallest in the path of progress, **it is necessary that there be one pioneer who will lead the way without leaving any possibility of turning back"***

# Reviving Hebrew Culture in Israel

- **Hebrew** as a **spoken** + **secular** language => opposing Yiddish and other languages

- Hebrew **Education** (e.g., the 'Hebrew university', Jerusalem)

- Hebrew **secular culture**

- Jewish **festivals** (nature, agricultural)

- **New image** (the 'new Jew')



Est. 1918

# Next Session…

- Between the Wars, 1967-2000

Questions? Feel free to email the lecturer =>

hadar@fss.muni.cz